

The Response to WA Schools to Climate Change: A Submission from the Chalk Face.

My name is Geoffrey Holt, after graduating in Economics with honours from the University of Manchester in 1986, I worked as volunteer teacher in Tanzania with VSO for two years and thereafter pursued a teaching career in inner city Manchester where I also completed my MPhil by research based upon researching education and values in Tanzania. I emigrated to WA with my wife, Alison and our two children in 1997 and have been employed by the DoE ever since working as Aboriginal Curriculum Coordinator at Swan View SHS for 9 years, followed by a year at Balga SHS running the Nyungar Sports Program and have subsequently worked at Busselton Senior High School where I currently have the following responsibilities and time allocations:

0.4 FTE - Level 3 Classroom Teacher in Humanities & Social Studies.

0.3 FTE - Head of Year 9 & 10 – pastoral care and student services responsibilities including student wellbeing and engagement intervention programs.

0.1 FTE - Coordinator of the Student Council responsible for promoting student leadership, the articulation of the student voice and facilitating a range of student led initiatives based around the promotion of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.(SDG's)

0.0 FTE – Coordinate BSHS Waste & Sustainability Program, organise a whole of school approach to waste avoidance, recovery, reuse and recycling running the Container Deposit Scheme, weekly school clean ups and engagement interventions for students based upon sustainability activities and programs promoting student wellbeing and mental health.

0.0 FTE – UNESCO Global Schools Advocate: I promote Global Citizenship Education (GCE) through the Schools' award winning Tenderfeet program as well as Education for Sustainable Development (EDS) running a range of climate action for students in partnership with local community groups including environmental recovery activities for students; tree planting, Tangaroa Blue beach clean ups, Australian Microplastics Association activities, anti-erosion activities and the mitigation of introduced flora in the community (more commonly known weeding). Additionally, I have worked with Gwen Gray, the school AIEO, to develop and implement the Waalitj Kaaditjin engagement program for indigenous students based around caring for country.

I am the SSTUWA union rep at BSHS and currently sit on the state executive of the SSTUWA.

In my career as a public educator in WA, I have won several individual state and federal awards of achievement including:

- Level 3 Classroom Teacher recognition (2003)
- Outstanding National Achievement by a Teacher (NIQTSL) for improving outcomes for Indigenous student at Swan View SHS (2005)
- Garth Boomer Award for curriculum innovation Australian Curriculum Studies Association (2006)
- United Nations Association of Australia (WA) World Teachers' Day Award for Excellence in Global Citizenship Education (2020)

I was inspired to write this submission in the hope that it might provide members of the standing committee with insight into the practical issues involved in the promotion and implementation of Education for Climate Change and Climate Action, and more broadly, Education for Sustainable Development in schools. I am aware that you will have received many detailed submissions from stakeholders looking at the big picture in terms of policy and reform, but this submission provides an unapologetically “warts and all” account of the issues we face as teachers and leaders at school, classroom, and community level in meeting the needs of our students with regards to the response of schools to climate change.

After dedicating ten years or so of my career to improving outcomes for Indigenous students in the Swan district, I moved to Busselton SHS where I have increasingly dedicated my time and efforts to promoting and delivering outcomes based around global citizenship and education for sustainability. I was inspired to do this by the unfolding climate crisis and the need to prepare all students for the many challenges they face now and will face in their lives beyond school.

It is a sad but unavoidable observation that many students and school staff, do not look to the future with a sense of optimism rather with a sense of anxiety. My interactions with hundreds of students are confirmed by current academic research¹ that there is a pandemic of ecoanxiety for the future of the planet and its biodiversity which is truly global cutting across geographic and socio-economic cleavages. At the heart of this anxiety is a sense of powerlessness on the part of youth to limit the harm being done to the planet and their collective futures. Psychologists have established that this is compounded by feelings of inadequate action taken by governments, businesses and adults that have led to feelings of betrayal, abandonment, and moral injury.²

As a teacher and someone who deals with student wellbeing issues daily, I am very much aware that students need to fully understand the issues we face in terms of climate change education and crucially, they need to be empowered to take climate action so that they achieve a degree of agency which is largely absent from the education system as things stand. The provision of agency is what I have been working towards by seeking to enable students to have multiple and regular opportunities to become involved in climate action and to develop the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours which will better equip them to cope with the climate crisis as it unfolds.

The Think Global: Act Local mantra may be somewhat hackneyed, but it is one which still resonates as is another aphorism which arose out of my own research into education's role in shaping attitudes, namely: "Values are Caught NOT Taught." The need for education systems to offer experiential learning based around climate and sustainability cannot be overstressed. Without providing them with the opportunity to take climate action, I fear that student learning about our climate future may even enhance the level of ecoanxiety they experience.

I will now attempt to address your terms of reference.

Co Benefits of Climate Education and Action in WA Schools:

Student Learning

Many students report that they learn best by experience, by seeing and doing, through praxis. The education system's in-built bias towards academic learning, regurgitation of facts and high stakes testing, effectively marginalises many students especially those from minority groups and low SEI backgrounds including ATSI students. Most students do not read The Guardian or watch ABC or SBS News, they are more likely to get their information on climate change and other issues from social media and their ideas and values result from primary socialisation among family and friends in the community.

If we are to adequately prepare students for the myriad challenges, we face due to the climate crisis, we must ensure that all students have multiple and ongoing opportunities to learn about climate change in the classroom and, of equal importance, to undertake climate action at school and in the community.

After 30 years plus working with those at educational risk among others, I can attest to the fact that many students who are disengaged in the classroom come alive when they enter the natural environment. This is

¹ Marks, E. & Hickman, C. September 2021, Young People's Voices on Climate Anxiety, Government Betrayal and Moral Injury: A Global Phenomenon. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3918955

² Ibid.

especially the case with Indigenous students who are crying out for our schools to enable them to connect to country. This is a connection that has been shamelessly broken since colonisation.

In the many years I have been taking students out on field trips and undertaking climate action, I have repeatedly observed improved student attendance, engagement, self-confidence, and better mental health thanks to being in and caring for the natural environment. I try to include at least one conservation activity in the form of an excursion for each of my HASS classes. At the end of each semester, I survey my students about their experiences and perceptions of the course. Almost without exception they report positive sentiments associated with being in nature and caring for country.³

Q: What was the highlight of the Y10 HASS program for you?

“Doing the tree planting and making those wire cages with the stones in (gabions) at Meelup, why can’t we do that stuff more often? We all loved it and learned a lot.” (Jasmine Y10 Indigenous Student, BSHS 2017)

I would also argue that there will be many jobs in the economies of the future which will involve environmental recovery and sustainability, yet we are wedded to a rigid and pedantic classroom-based notion of learning that does not meet the needs of many students or the natural environment.

- **Student and staff physical and mental health.**

There is strong evidence to support improved physical and mental health benefits arising out of spending time in the natural environment and especially contributing to environmental recovery and caring for country. Spending time in the natural environment is linked to both cognitive benefits and improvements in mood, mental health, and emotional well-being. Feeling connected to nature can produce similar benefits to well-being, regardless of how much time one spends outdoors.

Both green spaces and blue spaces (aquatic environments) produce well-being benefits. More remote and biodiverse spaces may be particularly helpful, though even urban parks and trees can lead to positive outcomes.⁴

- **Financial savings in the education system.**

I am certain that if schools were to wholeheartedly embrace climate action and sustainability huge savings would arise. Look at our consumption of energy, water, and the waste we send to landfill from our schools and colleges. There is an enormous amount of waste in the system with little if any incentive for us to consider conservation. Air conditions cranked down to 16C in summer and 28C in winter, fans, lights, and computers left on all night and even through the holidays are not uncommon! Perfectly good resources and materials buried in landfill. These issues need urgent attention at policy and operational level.

- **The community.**

UN SDG 17 is about partnerships for sustainable development, whilst this may be seen as a global goal, I have striven to apply it locally in the SW Cape. I have developed a large network of partnerships with local environmental and community groups as well as the City of Busselton Environment Officers, these include Friends of Meelup Regional Park, Toby Inlet Catchment Group, Southwest Catchments Council, Ludlow Tuart Forrest Restoration Group, Tangaroa Blue, AUSMAP, Friends of the Cape-to-Cape Track, Yallingup LCDC and the custodians the Undalup Association. Local primary schools, community supporters such as Accor Group, Gannaways bus company and host of local small businesses.

³ BSHS Student comments, see feature article and images in attachments.

⁴ <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/nurtured-nature>

These supporters have consistently provided opportunities for students to engage with the Education for Sustainable Development involving environmental projects and initiatives which promote global citizenship education. There is a clear appetite in the community to engage with schools and students with multiple benefits for all concerned.

One case which exemplified the benefits of school community partnerships whilst giving agency to our students in acting on climate has involved our ongoing rehabilitation of the Eagle Bay Wildlife Corridor which links the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park with Meelup Regional Park (City of Busselton's A Class Reserve). For approximately ten years now the Friends of Meelup RP, a local voluntary group comprised of mainly retired volunteers together with the Environment Officers from the City of Busselton, have invited me to bring groups of students from Busselton SHS to assist with various environmental recovery projects. These have included the revegetation of the Eagle Bay Wildlife Corridor, building, and installing gabions as anti-erosion measures in the park, planting native trees and shrubs, as well as removing invasive flora such as thistles and cape weeds, mulching and removing tree guards.

These activities and many more across the City of Busselton, have involved thousands of students in the past ten years spending time in nature and taking direct climate action. These learning opportunities for students have been profound and would not be possible in the classroom including:

- Cultural Appreciation - Undalup custodians including the school AIEO Gwen Gray, teach students about the connection to country of the Wadandi traditional owners with respect to specific locations and their historic and contemporary significance.
- Conservation Value - The value and biodiversity of the area including the unique and endemic species of fauna and flora that our actions are designed to protect.
- Recreational value of the areas involved – how the community benefits from sustaining and protecting these specific environments.
- The geology and topography of the land and how it changes over time.
- The threats to biodiversity and sustainability arising out of human impact, introduced species, global heating, and climate volatility.
- Plans and measures for the management of the environment including measures to mitigate the impact of human induced climate change.

The above dot points would typically form the basis of a written report or presentation following a field trip / excursion activity for students and represents an incredibly rich learning opportunity.

Students undertaking these activities would do so as a curriculum-based activity such as a geography field trip field trip or investigation which forms part of the scope and sequence of the curricula that is assessed and reported upon. This approach could and, in my view, should form the basis of a cross curricula activity as the learning outcomes can readily be applied to the Geography of Human Impact Upon the Environment and Science, Ecology for example. Despite the rich and impactful nature of this as a learning activity, it is rare to find such activities in public schools due to a range of factors which I will identify under the coming Barriers section subheading of this submission.

An example of the potential for such an approach relates to another ongoing Year 10 HASS activity whereby 50 students spent a morning at Meelup Regional Park undertaking a Tangaroa Blue Beach clean-up and data gathering activity for the Australian Marine Debris Initiative. They do this as a part of the Y10 HASS program. Prior to the activity they undertake background research on the problem of marine debris and waste as well as the conservation value of Meelup Regional Park. On the day of the activity the students are met at Meelup Beach by the City of Busselton Environment Officer Kay Lehman and Friends of Meelup RP Chair Bob Gibney who explains the history and conservation value of the park. Undalup Association's Gwen Gray shares the cultural significance of the area and coastline with the group before they split into pairs and comb the shoreline for debris which they record on their data sheets. After two hours, the students assemble back at the beach and tip the content of their sacks onto a tarp.

The students commonly find 50- 100kg of debris and litter along a 4km stretch of shore from Point Piquet to Castle Bay, the activity is timed to coincide with the end of the salmon fishing season, and it is no surprise to find evidence of irresponsible fishing, eating, and drinking in the park with drink bottles, food wrappers and discarded fishing equipment collected. After weighing, recovering, and recycling what we can we take the rest of the waste to the tip. Students proceeded to write a field report and produce a video to share their findings and are often shocked by the extent of littering and waste that they had find:

“It really is awful; it makes you think when you see the rubbish that’s out there. I will admit I have not always acted sustainably when I go to the beach with my mates, but I will in the future. This has been a game changer for me.” (Yoshi, Year 10 student BSHS 2019)

Students present their findings to their peers at BSHS at year assemblies and encourage all students to sign up for Plastic Free July. This is where agency takes effect as a few years back, the students requested to show a video they made and present findings to a meeting of the full council at the City of Busselton. Student leaders spoke passionately and eloquently about their experiences and urged the council to take action to raise awareness of the perils of waste, especially plastics, in the park.

The student presentation made a quite an impact and prompted the council to undertake a study and employ a contractor to address the issue of marine debris in the park to promote sustainability. In the aftermath of the activity BSHS students adopted Meelup beach as we run our beach carnival there. We now undertake annual Tangaroa Blue activities after the easter salmon fishing season. This year we have expanded our activities to include looking at the problem of microplastics on the high-water line and student leaders have presented their findings to the whole school at assemblies.

These activities can be measured in cognitive outcomes related to marine debris and littering, plastics and microplastic pollution, but also include social and emotional outcomes as well as behaviour and values-based outcomes. The hundreds of students who engage in these annual activities report a sense of satisfaction at being able to take direct climate action. Many admit to having dropped litter and left things at the beach in the past. However, the experience of participating in such activities profoundly impacts students in changing attitudes and behaviours. This reinforces my strong belief that *Values are **Caught Not Taught!***

This is but one of many examples of how schools can and should promote climate action and ESD for all students.

Not all activities need involve getting busses to the local beach or A class reserve, a further example of climate action and ESD at school rests with our Waste & Sustainability Program (WASP).

After being in the too hard basket, the problem of waste at BSHS was high on the agenda of the student council in a bid to reduce our collective ecological footprint. The problem of waste and littering in the school was seen through a deficit lens with “Scab Duty” epitomising the problem and lack of a solution. Previously, students found dropping litter or misbehaving at recess might be required to take a bucket and tongs and collect litter by the duty teacher. This was an ineffective and counterproductive measure which reinforced the association of caring for the environment with punitive measures and negativity. The student council came up with the slogan of “Our Waste Our Responsibility” in launching a campaign to radically change the way we view and manage waste in the school.

After conducting waste audits, the council and I extrapolated that the school emptied 40 general waste bins per week, forty weeks a year totalling 1600 waste bins per year. The amount of waste going to landfill was approximately enough to fill the local council swimming pool at Geographe Leisure twice over! Our audit further revealed that 75% of this waste could be either avoided, recovered, reused, or recycled.

The students and I invited experts from Waste Wise Schools to visit the school and provide advice. Their immediate observation was that we had way too many general bins and no facility for recycling or organic waste as well as no process for waste recovery or reuse. The council and I worked for two years to convince

the school administration to allow us to deliver the WASP. We launched the program in Term One of this year and the outcomes have been nothing short of spectacular:

- We have reduced the number of general waste bins from 40 down to 10
- We have introduced one waste station in each quad with an organic and CDS bin in each
- We have reduced, recovered, and recycled 75% of the waste previously buried in landfill
- We have made a several hundred dollars so far from running a CDS program at the school which in reinvested into the program
- We have established a worm farm, composting and veg garden run by an eco-warrior's club
- The WASP program is a combined effort between Geographe Education Support Centre and BSHS intervention students. It is truly heart-warming to see young people who have been born with such intellectual and physical disabilities working so harmoniously with mainstream kids at risk to care for the school and the climate.

• **Are these co-benefits recognised and promoted?**

In my experience of pursuing climate and sustainability actions and education initiatives, management at school level are happy to have staff such as me run programs so long as it does not involve the allocation of additional time or resources. They are also happy to take the credit for such activities in so much as they reflect positively upon the school and their management.

I am sad to report that I have asked the past three principals at BSHS to recognise and properly resource the work I, my colleagues, and students, have been engaged with but have not had replies to any of my emails or been fobbed off. This speaks volumes about the level of importance attached to climate and sustainability action operationally.

• **Is there an opportunity to cross-promote existing environmental and health activities being undertaken in schools as climate action?**

Absolutely, I know that teachers out there are crying out for examples of ways in which we can incorporate and integrate climate and sustainability actions into schools at all levels, but this does not seem to be a priority in most cases.

I have suggested that the new Professional Learning Institute and SCSA get together with UNAAWA, SSTUWA and other interested parties to showcase excellence in climate action and education for sustainable development. Teachers are crying out for inspiration and examples of what amazing things can be achieved and how they can be integrated not the school curriculum in terms of climate action and education.

• **How and why have these actions been initiated within schools?**

Again, I can only speak for myself and my school, but over the past 15 years or so I have instigated initiatives despite a lack of support from school management rather than because of it. I have put untold hours into working with students and community partners to engage in climate action and sustainability with little, if any, encouragement, or recognition at school level. Indeed, I have had to battle to get things off the ground year after year.

I am a tenacious and energetic educator driven by a passion for the environment and social justice. My own kids attended the public school I work at, and I have always strived to ensure that public education is inclusive and truly meets the needs of our kids. Sadly, many teachers are so stressed and overworked busily teaching to the test, trying to manage challenging behaviour, to cover a curriculum, that they would not have the time, inclination, or tenacity to initiate such programs. Let us be honest; why should they? It is not in their JDF, neither is it expected of them, and neither are they given the time or resources. This is not to say that they would not like to initiate innovative cross curricula programs and create integrated and experiential learning

opportunities which address climate change, they just don't have time, and many would not know where to start.

- **The Committee is particularly interested to hear about examples of climate action in schools which:**

- o **Involve community partnerships**

Please refer to my previous discussion of examples of climate action in Meelup Regional Park and across the City of Busselton and see the images and articles attached which relate to the actions described.

- o **Are Aboriginal-led and recognise indigenous knowledge.**

I alluded to collaboration with Gwen Gray, BSHS AIEO and member of the Undalup Association. Every time that our students engage in environmental activities on country. I arrange for Gwen to attend to ensure that cultural appreciation is manifest. Gwen will often bring Wayne or Zac Webb along to explain in detail the cultural significance of the country we are gathered on and to share their encyclopaedic knowledge to the fauna and flora of the area.

The photo and article of Waalitj Kaaditjin Indigenous students from BSHS engaged making gabions with then AIEO Mark Bonshore, was taken a few years ago when we undertook anti-erosion work on the kangaroo trails in the park. We have undertaken many such activities with Waalitj Kaaditjin students caring for country at many reserves in the City of Busselton.

As a classroom teacher, I cannot imagine a better way to implement our cultural standards framework and to ensure that Aboriginal knowledge and appreciation is fully respected. When Zac Webb stands in front of the students and says *"Welcome to Wadandi Country, nature is our classroom."* It pretty much says it all.

c. Barriers that schools encounter in undertaking climate action and how these can be addressed

- Barriers may include (but are not limited to):

Little or no time allocation to coordinate and deliver climate action in schools: As mentioned above, despite numerous appeals and requests and the provision of evidence of effective programming and interventions, I have been unsuccessful in obtaining time from three successive school principals. Even 0.1FTE seems to be too much to ask. I would estimate that I spend all my DoTT time and engage in two to three hours of unofficial contact time supervising groups of students running the school waste recovery program, but this is neither recognised nor rewarded. In fairness I do get some time for pastoral care and behaviour which I use to incorporate and include engagement activities around waste recovery with dozens of my students to excellent effect.

Organising and running climate actions such as tree planting, beach clean ups and other environmental recovery activities is given no time. It consumes all of my DoTT time, I must put together excursion management plans, seek funding or pass the cost of transport on to the students, collect the bus an hour before school, drive the bus to school, collect students and take them to the locations and return the bus after school plus set relief and catch up on missed work upon my return the next day. Little wonder most staff do not follow this lead. It is a serious workload imposition.

Little or recognition of the work involved in planning, coordinating, and supervising the activities. The only recognition which occurs is when I take photos and help students to write articles for the school newsletter and sometimes the local paper. I also send stories to affiliated organisations such as Friends of Meelup Regional Park and the UNAAWA so that our work receives a degree of recognition. The writing of articles and making of videos is a time consuming but necessary part of the work so that these can be shared with all

students at year assemblies to further raise awareness and help to educate students in education for sustainability.

Curriculum: “A mile wide and an inch thick” this observation is obviously an extreme characterisation but does resonate with many teachers who have to teach to a rigid scope and sequence leaving little if any room to squeeze in token climate and sustainability topics. The science curriculum at secondary level is very content driven and I have been unsuccessful in persuading science colleagues to collaborate on cross curricula endeavours with a climate or environmental focus.

At the same time as there does not seem to be room for climate change education there does seem to be an accommodation for [redacted] to take several hours of student contact time in spreading [redacted] narratives about fossil fuels and “clean gas” as a transitional fuel. This organisation has serious resources and sends people who are not educators to schools offering “real science lessons and careers information” for the fossil fuel industry. In my view, this should be stopped. There is a real need for science-based arguments such as those made by Clean State and The Conservation Council to be given a platform to counter the pervasive and false narratives

I recently ran a simple survey with colleagues asking them if they felt that they and their students had opportunities to meet the outcomes of UNESCO’s Climate Change Education. The results were unsurprising in that teachers reported limited or no opportunities to cover the outcomes with students in their classes given the constraints and demands of existing curricula.

I teach humanities and my wife is a science, together we have over 50 years of experience of teaching and are convinced that the curriculum is in many ways outdated and not responsive to the urgent need to address the climate emergency. We are crying out for a review of the curriculum and a decluttering such that teacher’s professionalism is restored and, like in Finland, are encouraged to take deep dives into topics such as climate and sustainability with their students rather than teaching to the test in a prescribed manner.

Pedagogy is another area of huge concern to me. I am old enough to remember when I started teaching it was about student centred learning. I taught in an open college where learning was self-paced, and educators were more facilitators of learning than teachers. In the period between the late 80s and now we have seen outcomes-based education come and go and a disturbing but global propensity towards highly prescriptive curricula underpinned by a stifling orthodoxy based around explicit and direct instruction.

In my view, the increasing prominence in WA of unaccountable and for-profit organisations [redacted] needs to be addressed. For the past three years [redacted] SHS like many other public schools, has been collaborating with [redacted] in a bid to improve school results. Members of the school administration and Professional Learning Community (PLC) leaders have taken time away from school to develop the school “Business” (sic) plans and workstreams guided by [redacted] External metrics with their origins in private industry have begun to pervade school plans. Many of these are not a good fit; schools are not businesses, and our students are not consumers or products. It is hard to escape the feeling that the tail is wagging the dog when it comes to setting the agenda for schools. Small wonder there is not even a mention of climate or sustainability in our school business plan and many others whilst calls to include it have fallen on deaf ears.

[redacted] is a private for-profit business which offers to share teaching mastery and “the science of learning” for a price to schools. Increasingly, dozens of schools are now sending their staff along [redacted] to learn how to become more effective classroom teachers. [redacted] has sent over half [redacted] staff along in the last two years and plans to have most teachers trained with [redacted] instruction strategies by the end of 2022. A small group of us recalcitrants have refused believing that our experience and postgraduate qualifications render this an exercise an extraneous, unnecessary, and costly imposition.

The [redacted] course has involved 100 -150 hours of additional professional learning and practice for each participant at a cost of thousands of several dollars for each, which has apparently been subsidised by an undisclosed philanthropist. I believe that they [redacted] are linked to the fossil fuel and mining industry.

Teachers are expected to use a pedagogy which is highly prescriptive and regimented. It involves many tried and tested methods of teaching such as explicit lesson goals, daily reviews, and choral call and response strategies to involve all students in the lesson. None of this is new. has been an enormous imposition on the staff at my school and many others and has been the subject of disquiet among union members who object to signing a confidentiality agreement with a private provider for the selective and of their classroom data. Students have reported feeling bored and like they are being processed when teacher after teacher applies the same teaching strategy and methodology. The school captains at BSHS went so far as to make this point in their valedictory address just a few weeks ago.

The SSTUWA has recently investigated the impact of and reported that it represents a straitjacket approach to pedagogy which undermines teacher autonomy and professional judgement. The fact that metrics are now starting to appear in teacher Performance Management processes is a major concern as is the growing prevalence of classroom observations designed to assess the extent to which staff are using strategies in the classroom. The SSTUWA points out that Performance Management belongs to an individual teacher as does classroom observation and ought not to be inspectorial and appraisal based.

The fact is that the types of pedagogy advocated by UNESCO as integral to Education for Sustainable Development are diametrically opposed to the prescriptive orthodoxy We need to encourage deep and critical thinking, diversity and problem solving.

UNESCO defines ESD as any educational efforts that give students knowledge, skills, values, engagement, attitudes, and experiences around sustainable lifestyles or sustainable ways of life. Active learning pedagogy, such as group work, debates, classroom discussions, and inquiry-based learning, is broadly accepted as essential for student success in ESD learning.

Student Achievement

There is compelling evidence linking Environmental Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and Climate Change Education to increased student academic performance. The impacts of Education 2030 have been demonstrated across a variety of countries and schools. A literature review of over 14+ comprehensive studies in multiple contexts found that there is a substantial amount of evidence that links Education 2030 with positive academic achievements (Aikens). A Stanford University review of ~120 peer-reviewed studies found that environmental education improves academic performance, enhances critical thinking skills, and develops life skills. 90% of the studies reviewed saw increased skills for students and 86% saw positive changes in students. ⁵

I cannot help but wonder what would have been the outcome if almost all my current school's teachers had been required or strongly encouraged to undertake 150 hours each of UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development training rather than engage

- **Reluctant attitudes towards climate action:**

I believe that I have explained with numerous examples just how difficult it is to get climate action happening in schools under the current arrangements.

d. What more can be done to support schools to respond to climate change?

- How can capacity be built within schools to prepare for and respond to climate change?
- How can schools be equipped to make well informed decisions about undertaking climate action?

⁵ UNESCO Global Schools Education for Sustainable Development Advocacy Workshop. 2021

- How are schools outside WA being supported to undertake climate action, and could aspects of this be adopted in WA?

Introduce mandatory Climate Change Education and Education for Sustainable Development in all schools. Require all schools to have sustainability and climate action as a part of their strategic and operational plans complete with audits and targets.

Create space for Climate Change Education and climate action programs in schools so that these activities are reported on and count towards WACE.

Include Education for Sustainable Development and Climate Change Education and Action into the staffing formula ringfenced for all schools ensuring that adequate full time equivalent staff allocation is made available away from teaching.

Organise stakeholders to showcase examples of successful climate change education/action and education for sustainable development so that these can be shared with all schools. It would be useful to have expert consultants to help guide and support the development of programs in schools in similar ways to how Waste Wise Schools run professional development and support schools with grants and ongoing assistance. However, the scale of the climate emergency calls for much more funding and operations on a far larger scale state-wide.

The United Kingdom has just revised its national curriculum to address the climate emergency. Finland is a world leader in sustainability and regularly tops the Pisa rankings. I suggest that a research project be conducted to look at world's best practise and see what is transferable in terms of WA.

The purpose of this submission is to offer a view from a teacher at the chalk face. I hope that it has provided insight into the issues and barriers to effective action. I also hope that it suggests ways forward to enable teachers like myself and thousands of other to better meet the needs of our students and to contribute more fully in responding to the climate emergency in the educational domain.

My final observation is one of optimism, I am constantly encouraged by the quality of the young people I am privileged to work with.