



newsletter

Term 1 2010

No.14

Last week Wyong Shire Council was invited to present the Water Education in Pre-Schools Program as part of the Little Green Steps Program at Woollahra Pre-School in Sydney. Represented on the day were 5 different Councils and 11 Child Care Centres. What struck us was we are all on a very similar path in our endeavour to ensure our Centres and children are part of sustainable practices and positive environmental focus. Thus ensuring children, staff and parents all work together to provide the optimum early childhood program for each child in our service through basic environmental principles. We are all on the same page with our concerns for the environment and positive ways we engage our children in learning and living sustainable messages. Each Centre presented their ideas and challenges faced and outlined below are the main areas where they were achieving great outcomes. What a wonderful opportunity to network and share ideas!

Sharing Ideas of current projects – inspirational ideas which work!

- Happyplants, low maintenance plants outdoor or jungle areas in outdoor learning space for a natural 'hiding' playspace
- Small watertanks installed for veggie patch, herb gardens and outdoor waterplay
- Recycled materials eg making mosaic tiles from small square tiles (see last years LGS frogpond for tile ideas!), drumkits from old waterdrums, xylophone from smooth recycled timber
- Making paints from plants in the garden – children experiment with bright flower colours and seeds
- Involve children in the lifecycle of plants living and dying and new growth, together with a watertank and then introduce wormfarms, compost and recycle food scraps
- Incorporate animals to care and attend
- Teach children how to respect nature
- Reduce artificial grass areas with raised garden beds placed



- straight onto the surface and also climbing gardens
- Try to naturalize the outdoor learning environment and playspaces
- Portable Greenhouses for children to germinate and grow and plant in veggie patch
- Solar hot water systems
- Low windows for natural light and high louvre windows for airflow rather than air conditioning
- New lino made with recycled materials
- Yard has retractable umbrellas for portable shade in summer and lower in winter
- Watersaving flush and taps installed in all childrens and adult bathrooms
- Hang out washing to be airdried rather than in dryer – involve the children in this activity – they love it!
- Landscaping with natives and drought tolerant plants so reduces need for water
- Invited the garbage truck and recycling officer to visit to engage children in the three bin system – recycling, waste and green bin. (Here on the coast call Michelle Norman at Thiess on 43363121 mnorman@thiess-services.com.au)
- Choose a 'keen green staff member' to incorporate ideas and motivate staff, committees and parents to organise a working bee and ask local hardware for donations to start your own compost, wormfarm and veggie patch

Areas currently to be developed

- Installing water tanks in services. (Interestingly also in a survey collated here on the Coast of 54 Centres, only 19 had watertanks installed)
- Immense interest in many services to bring in chicken coops and also hatching eggs! A fantastic idea you can use is a service such as 'Rentachook' or Chicks R Us. Check out websites www.rentachook.com and www.chicksrus.com.au
- Bushtucker Gardens – to incorporate the indigenous aspect and culture
- Ideas included to invite elders in to talk to the children and be involved. Meet with elders at local water sources
- Walks in the local area to engage in local environment, draw/sketch plants
- Japanese dripping tap with recycled water and tai chi in outdoor garden
- Look at children's home environment – if live in a unit, take for local walks and encompass the outdoors



Green Cleaning In Our Centres

Do childcare centres have to use disinfectants? Is vinegar a suitable 'alternative' disinfectant? And how do you tell whether a cleaning product is green or not?

These were some of the questions tackled at the Green Cleaning Workshop held in partnership with Wyong Shire and Gosford City Council at Brightstart Childcare Centre Bateau Bay last October, when Council invited Bridget Gardner of Fresh Green Clean to conduct the training session, 'Child-safe and Sustainable Hygiene'.

The session covered a range of issues - it's amazing how much there is to learn about cleaning and hygiene. Below is a brief summary of what we learnt:

Disinfectants are usually unnecessary

Childcare regulations and guidelines state that disinfectants are only required during reportable outbreaks. Cleaning with detergent and warm water can remove enough germs to be healthy.

The belief that it is better to use disinfectants 'just to be on the safe-side' was quickly negated when we read the labels and learnt that the surface should actually be cleaned first, THEN they should soak the surface for at least 10 minutes! Who has time for this? If simply cleaning is adequate, then using disinfectants incorrectly is surely exposing children unnecessarily to chemicals.

Effective cleaning

Next we discussed how to make sure our cleaning products, equipment and procedures clean effectively. For example, detergent should lift dirt from the surface and rinse away cleanly. But if the dilution is too strong it can leave behind a residue of detergent, dirt and germs. Air-drying the surface afterwards is important too. Use a clean cloth or paper towel if this is not possible.

We also found detergent and warm water decanted into small plastic bottles to pour directly onto the area required and NOT spray bottles which expose the products throughout the air for children to breathe in, are the most effective option and reduce waste too.

Another option is Microfibre cloths and mops that clean with water only. Buying quality brands and daily laundering ensures they are effective. Microfibre is not recommended on nappy change mats because soaking them in disinfectant before washing will ruin them.

Disappointingly to some, we learnt that vinegar is not able to be classified a disinfectant and not ideal for cleaning bodily fluids either as it can congeal protein.

So the cleaning process is the most important part. With the use of Bridget's 'coffee boards' (baked-on instant coffee) we experienced how cleaning lightly and rapidly creates friction and actually cleans faster than scrubbing hard. We also learnt that stubborn grime can be soaked off the surface, or scoured with a spot of bicarb soda.

Green Cleaning Product Checklist

The final part of the session had us rating cleaning products using Fresh Green Cleans' Product Checklist. This simple tool helped us analyse product labels and Material Safety Data Sheets:

1. Keep it simple and safe: Choose non-hazardous and pH neutral. Avoid complex formulas.
2. Show me the data: Choose products that list all their ingredients, or are certified by GECA*.
3. Breathe easy: Choose products with low or no fragrances. Avoid products that are respiratory irritants, or contain chlorine or VOCs (volatile organic compounds).
4. Sustainable Solutions: Choose products that are able to be diluted, locally made, in recyclable or recycled packaging, and are Readily Biodegradable to AS4351.

* www.geca.org.au

Bridget is director of Australia's leading green clean consulting and training company. www.freshgreenclean.com.au



CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS

by Phil Smith

Humans have caused the problem of accelerating climate change; humans need to be the cause of the solutions. Our work in environmental education needs to enable individuals and communities to find the competence and power within. To recognise that power and accept responsibility for action. Education work needs to build the skills to act and the capacity to have fierce and courageous conversations that challenge the status quo. It must enable people to make meaning, not just accept it; to build wisdom, not simply receive it; to produce knowledge, not blithely reproduce it; to be heard not herded. Our task is to build self efficacy – the trio of beliefs that something can be done, I can do something, and, what I do will make a difference.

(Taken from ozEnews issue 114 Dec 2009)

The sustainable development case

Humanity faces urgent problems affecting local, regional and global environments, and social and economic development. The Earth's limited natural resources are being consumed more rapidly than they are being replaced, and the effects of global warming upon ecological balance and biodiversity are well known.



Rising sea levels threaten millions in less-developed nations. The consequences – increasing poverty, migration, food shortages and risks to health and security – are extremely serious. The goals of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014 (UNESCO, 2005) are therefore to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development (SD) into all aspects of education and learning. SD is defined as development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987).

It looks beyond providing equity to the current global population to providing equity with future generations in mind (Speth, 2008). There can therefore be little better place to start than in early childhood care and education. Agenda 21, the action plan for sustainable development drawn up at the United Nations 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro (UNCED, 1992) prioritises basic primary education. But it is in early childhood that children are at their most vulnerable and most at risk from the impact of environmental challenges.

Early childhood is also the period when fundamental attitudes and values are formed. The UN World Summit referred to social development, economic development, and environmental protection, as the three 'interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars' of sustainable development. The challenge for early educators is therefore to develop educational systems, curricula and pedagogic practices that are sustainable in terms of each of these pillars, and guidelines have now been developed to meet that challenge (Davies et al., 2009). The concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) is centrally concerned with achieving individual 'freedom' and 'capability' (Sen, 1999), along with commitments to intercultural respect and a recognition of global interdependence. It is therefore essential that access to early childhood education for sustainability (Prämling-Samuelsson and Kaga, 2008) is expanded globally in order to set the foundations for future lives characterised by self-respect, respect for others, and a respect for the environment. John Siraj-Blatchford, Visiting Professor, School of Human Sciences, Swansea University, United Kingdom Ingrid Prämling-Samuelsson, UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development,

University of Gothenburg, Sweden Education for sustainable development is about human development, equity and social justice, but with an additional future-oriented dimension. In planning for human development and education for present generations, we must also respect the needs and rights of future generations. ECEC is a crucible for implementing these values in practice with those who are most vulnerable and most open to new possibilities.

Taken from Early Childhood In focus – Open University Effective Early Childhood Programmes) Series edited by Martin Woodhead and John Oates Early Childhood in Focus is a series of publications produced by the Child and Youth Studies Group at The Open University, United Kingdom, with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Planning a sustainable event in your Early Childhood Services?

Looking at how we can promote sustainable events in our Early Childhood Services, from a small scale Staff Meeting to a Parent Information Night to a large scale Fete or Fair, the way we look at how we reduce reuse and recycle in the planning stages will ensure we promote sustainability from the ground up.

Even if you start by using reusable china cups and plates with metal teaspoons for these events, replacing plastic spoons and Styrofoam or plastic cups and plates, you will save money, resources and the environment.



A larger scale local event is shown below. The Central Coast is an amazing place for starting the movement towards sustainability. *Think local and act global!*

Greening the groove: festivals and the environment

By Kate Arneman
G-Online

Music festivals needn't burden the environment - the Peats Ridge Festival shows us how! Spare a thought for the rather monumental environmental (issues) that such large-scale events can cause, not to mention the less-visible carbon footprint of powering these events nor the impact of hundreds of thousands travelling to the festival site. For Peats sake! There must be a better way After a two-week intensive permaculture course in Byron Bay, British-born DJ Matt Grant found himself reconsidering his decade-old vision of setting up a music festival in the tradition of legendary UK festivals at Glastonbury and Leeds and almost gave it up to pursue a degree in environmental management.

"It woke me up to a bigger picture of looking at resources, looking at the planet," Grant says. "I was completely drawn two ways: [I was thinking] the festival is a passion but I have an obligation here to do something about sustainability. "Luckily for all those who have since enjoyed the Peats Ridge Sustainable Arts and Music Festival, Grant had an epiphany:

"One day it just clicked. What I love about festivals is that people can step into this space, and it's a space where they're open to new experiences and perhaps this is actually the best place to teach them about sustainability there's a strong and visible sustainability message at every level of the festival". The following are just some of what can be found:

- Composting toilets
- Solar-powered mobile phone recharge stations
- A bike chaperone service that encourages cycling to the event
- Organic food served on compostable plates and cutlery
- Four-bin sorting stations

The Ecoliving Stage (run in conjunction with the University of NSW Ecoliving Centre) runs a continuous program of talks, discussions and workshops throughout the festival.

In 2008, the achievements of Peats Ridge Festival were recognised by the NSW government with a Green Globe Award and their environmental education initiatives have been acknowledged by none other than the United Nations.

(Taken from ozEEnews issue 114 Dec 2009)



Little Green Steps Resources...

Many Centres have found our 'Little Green Steps Resource Library' an extremely valuable tool – from the book *The Outdoor Playspace Naturally* – Sue Elliot, to *Tiddalick Puppetsets to the Resource Kits on Water, Stormwater, Energy, Biodiversity/Wildlife and Waste*. Please remember these are for LOAN and other Centres are eagerly waiting their turn to borrow. If you could please return these items to Eva Fox at PO BOX 20 Wyong NSW 2259 or drop them into Council, we can send on to the next eager recipient on the list!

Remember too the Little Green Steps Resource Kits are available to borrow FREE from Wyong, Gosford and Ourimbah Uni Libraries and have been extremely popular as they also contain resources, books to read with the children and lots of great ideas!



CASE STUDY

Kindy Patch West Gosford

Children, families and teachers at Kindy Patch West Gosford have embarked on a magical journey through the natural world! We value the health and well-being of our bodies and, considering our location, we thought it imperative to have a practical and meaningful way to educate children about healthy foods and healthy bodies!

The conception of our garden began with a dream, followed by hugely successful car wash for the community after September's huge dust storm! This brought much help and donations from our community, and now we have a large and productive vegetable garden! The children have learned first hand that tomatoes grow on a vine and lettuce and cucumbers taste really great! Children of all ages now have the chance to participate in the ongoing maintenance of growing vegies and being able to taste the results of their work is priceless!! This has been a wonderful addition to the environmental education program in our centre – the children have learned so much about nature, the environment and their healthy bodies!!

PS Thank you for your contribution and advice to our centre. We have many plans for the future of the environment!

Phoebe Rose Wilby
Kindy Patch West Gosford

The Little Green Steps Reading Guide has been updated!

Gosford City Council's Library Services section regularly updates a great reading guide and the 2010 issue can now be found by going to the Little Green Steps section of the Gosford Council website. Just click on www.gosford.nsw.gov.au and then go to environment page. The Little Green Steps page can be accessed from the Environment page. This list has been designed to support you when promoting environmental topics at your service.

Council's Children's Librarian recommends the following publications:

One Tiny Turtle, Nicola Davis, Illustrated by Jane Chapman (2001) Walker Books

This beautiful picture book outlines the life cycle of a Loggerhead turtle. From her early life in the shallows with a soft shell until her role as a mother on the sandy shore this a beautiful children's story. The book makes the most of its large format to relate the ocean environment, using a range of colours and graphic techniques. Readers can trace the turtle's life in a clear sequence. Apart from the main story many pages carry a small format sub text that teachers can use to enhance the learning process. This title also has a wonderful index.

Recycled Crafts Box, Laura C. Martin (2003) Storey Publications

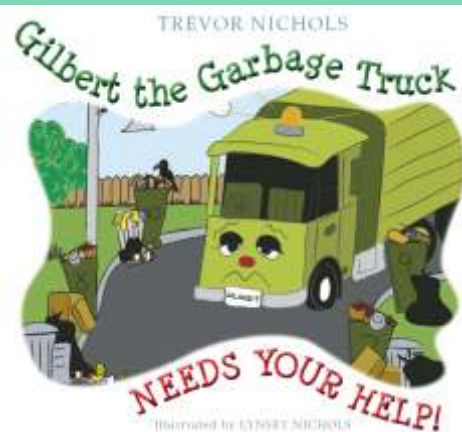
This resource book is just one of the many items held in the non-fiction collection to assist teachers and other childcare professionals make the most of recycled materials for craft activities.

With clear numbered instructions it outlines uses for all the major recycled materials. The educational snippets are handy and informative with each chapter focusing on "how you can make a difference". Check out the "Boot-iful" shoe garden. This title is fully indexed and has a glossary of terms.

Gilbert the Garbage Truck

Book drives home recycling message

A new book for children that encourages them to reduce, re-use and recycle their waste is has recently been released. Written by waste collector of 22 years Trevor Nichols and illustrated by his wife Lynsey, Gilbert



the Garbage Truck is the story of a worn out old garbage truck who'd really like people to give him a rest, and recycle their waste instead. Beautifully illustrated and written in verse, Gilbert the Garbage Truck will appeal to children of pre-school and primary age.

The self-published book is Trevor's literary debut and is fun, colourful and engaging. He hopes children will identify with Gilbert and his important environmental message.

'After 22 years of collecting waste I thought it was important that children have the opportunity to learn at an early age how important it is to sort the rubbish from the recyclables,' said Trevor. 'If we don't, we will continue to accumulate landfill and ruin our precious environment.'

For further information contact:

Tania Ward, HARVEST
M: 0411 133 306 or E: tania@harvestpr.com.au



Estuary Project - Tuggerah Lakes Catchment

Did you know that if you live in the Wyong Shire, you have a 90% chance of living in the Tuggerah Lakes Catchment?

The catchment area for our estuary measures 710 square kilometres of land plus the three lagoons of Tuggerah Lake, Budgewoi Lake and Lake Munmorah. With an abundance of birdlife on our lakes, seahorses calling our estuary home and platypuses swimming in the freshwater streams, it truly is a unique environment and well worth our efforts to preserve and protect it for future generations to enjoy.

Who owns the Lakes?

The NSW Government owns the Lakes but as Wyong Shire Council is the major land manager for the catchment, it has invested in their maintenance. Supported by a 'Caring for Our Country' Federal grant, Council has developed the Estuary Management Plan which includes works programs to rehabilitate stream banks, creeks, rivers, lake foreshores and wetlands. These works are being carried out over the next four years.

How you can help..

- Keep to designated walking tracks to prevent trampling of vegetation, especially Saltmarsh, which grow along our foreshores and provide a natural 'clothesline' for seagrass as it washes ashore.
- Minimise the wash created when boating in the creeks and lakes and you will help reduce erosion.
- Take your rubbish home with you when picnicking or boating. Alternatively, use designated rubbish bins in parks.
- Dispose of unwanted chemicals, paints and oils responsibly. One litre of oil can contaminate one million litres of water.

Rebecca Chaffer

Communications Officer-Estuary Management Plan

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The drain is just for rain

Students from Bateau Bay Primary School with the drain they have stencilled as part of Council's Saltwater Creek Education Project. From left to right – Samuel Leslie, Shaun Siltic, Luke Trapman and Levi White.

Primary school children in the Saltwater Creek catchment area have been busy stencilling stormwater drains in their school yards and learning all about the impacts on stormwater and Tuggerah Lakes. One of Council's Estuary Education Officers visited local primary schools Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic School and Bateau Bay Public School to talk to the students about the impacts of stormwater pollution on our local environment. The students stencilled the concrete around the drains with the words the drain is just for rain to remind staff and students that what goes down the drains ends up in Saltwater Creek and impacts on the rare aquatic life that exists in our lakes, like seahorses.

Central Coast Marine Discovery Centre

The Central Coast Marine Discovery Centre opened its doors to the public during the January 2010 summer holidays. This new facility, based at Terrigal is a great resource for the entire family. The centre provides information and colourful hands on activities to help children discover the magic of the Central Coast Marine and coastal environments.

Some of the great exhibits at the Marine Discovery Centre include:

- Wetlands Exhibition - explaining the importance of our local wetlands and the characteristics of a wetland.
- Find out about local marine life and marine history in the region.
- A touch pool where you can meet the residents of our local rock pools.
- Little fishes reading room - a great story-time space for very young children.

Why not think about becoming a friend of the Marine Discovery Centre ensuring you will get information about up and coming projects and events and a regular update on the progress of the centre? Check out the website at www.ccmcdc.org.au for further details about becoming a friend.



Visit the Central Coast Marine Discovery Centre

11 Terrigal Dr, Terrigal (Rotary Park, opposite Terrigal Pacific Motel)

10am-4pm weekends and school holidays

Cost: Adult - \$4, Child / concession - \$2, Family - \$10





Water Education In Pre-Schools Surveys on the Coast...

Survey forms have now been sent to the last group of 45 independent Child Care Centres on the Central Coast visited with the Water Education in Pre-Schools Program. Each Centre to respond will receive a FREE A4 laminated Water Poster Kit! Thankyou to those who have already responded and council is looking forward to receiving feedback from Centres about to send. Please do take a few minutes to let us know your thoughts on the program and items you would like to see in future Newsletters and inservices/workshops. We truly value your input and together the awareness of sustainability and the environment is growing throughout the Central Coast. It constantly amazes me how each Centre and staff, children and families work together to promote our environment.

Here are some ideas sent in on how you are making a difference...

Super Kids Watanobbi

To always turn the taps off and use leftover drinking water on plants

Bambini Pre-School Buff Point

Teach the children to always use the toilet half flush button and place 2 litre waterfilled bottle in cistern to displace water to use less per flush. Also to recycle runoff collected from taps to water the gardens

Mission Australia Bateau Bay

Reinforce the importance of water and in recycling in gardens and would like the Monthly Water Meter Chart to monitor water use with children

Lake Munmorah Pre-School

Water bottles available all day for children to use

Shine Early Learning... We discuss water wastage and the water cycle to encourage children to think about water and what would happen if it didn't rain...

We put in a water tank dedicated to watering gardens and for waterplay in watertrough which is then reused on the garden. Also a no dig garden – lots of mulch because it uses less water (please let me know if this was your Centre – there was no name and we have your FREE Water Poster Kit ready to send to you!! Thanks Eva (-:

Stay tuned as we will be organising a series of workshops based on your wants and needs throughout this year. The survey forms have given us great direction of what YOU would like to see so please keep sending them in or drop a line by email to Eva on Eva.Fox@wyong.nsw.gov.au We value your input and ideas!

As part of encouraging Centres to monitor their water use and engage Pre-Schoolers in actually being a part of this, we have developed a Monthly Water Meter Chart, so children throughout the year are able to monitor your Centres actual water use. Please email Eva.Fox@wyong.nsw.gov.au or call on 43505173 to receive your FREE chart.



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Environmental Calendar

- March 7 Clean Up Australia Day
- March 8 International Women's Day
- March 12-14 Country Music Festival
- March 13-21 Bike Week
- March 20 Warnervale Fair
- March 21 National Harmony Day
- March 21-28 Seniors Week
- March 22 World Water Day
- April 2-4 Easter
- April 10-18 Youth Week
- April 18 World Heritage Day
- April 25 Anzac Day
- May 10-16 National Volunteer Week
- May 23-29 Education Week
- May 24-30 Library & Information Week
- May 26 National Sorry Day



Join the email contact list

We are also very keen to receive an email contact address for each service. The email contact list will be used to send updates on the Little Green Steps program, email copies of the Newsletter (so you can copy items for Parent Newsletters), new ideas, workshops and environmental happenings on the Coast to keep you informed and up to date. To be included in the Pre-Schools Contact List please email Eva.Fox@wyong.nsw.gov.au. Thanks!

Eva Fox - Water Education Officer - Preschools, Wyong Shire Council
Ph: 4350 5173 Email: Eva.Fox@wyong.nsw.gov.au
Anni Griffiths - Environmental Education Officer, Gosford City Council
Ph: 4325 8355 Email: Anni.Griffiths@gosford.nsw.gov.au



CENTRAL COAST