

CONVERSATIONS ON SCHOOL–COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABILITY (A GUIDEBOOK)



By Jodi-Anne Smith, Leone Wheeler, Jose Roberto Guevara, Annette Gough and John Fien

With input from the research partners, volunteer researchers and the case study school and community personnel who have participated in the School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (SCLPFs) Project. We thank you all for your participation and support.



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LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS
FOR SUSTAINABILITY
(A GUIDEBOOK)**

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FOREWORD

School and community learning partnerships have been part of school life for decades. For the first time this publication, 'Conversations on School–Community Partnerships for Sustainability (A Guidebook)' captures the stories of some of those school community partnerships with the aim to share their experiences and reflections for building effective school community partnerships for sustainability.

Sustainability Victoria has been pleased to be a partner in the research that has resulted in this Guidebook. The school stories demonstrate diversity, richness and the rewards of active partnerships from the perspectives of school staff, students and community members who are all actively involved in the partnership projects described in this guidebook.

All of the stories in this publication demonstrate what can be achieved when schools work closely with their communities. For example, Hawkesdale P-12 College students work actively with the local shire to improve surrounds in local parks and reserves that will leave a lasting legacy for their community into the future.

I was very pleased to see some of the stories were of ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic schools on the 5Star journey. These schools actively demonstrate leadership in their community to achieve sustainability outcomes. Other stories showed the value of community members actively working with schools.

The Guidebook is an inspiration of what can be achieved and a great resource that will enable you to start the journey, continue the journey and celebrate the journey of effective school community learning partnerships for sustainability. I commend these stories to all who work in the field of Education for Sustainability.

Well done!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stan Krpan', with a stylized, cursive script.

Stan Krpan
Chief Executive Officer
Sustainability Victoria

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Case study sites¹

Altona North and Altona Meadows Children's Centres
Balnarring Primary School
Doveton North Primary School²
Emerald Primary School
Hawkesdale P12 College
Mill Park Secondary College
Montrose Primary School
Port Fairy Consolidated School
St Francis of the Fields Primary School
St Jude's Primary School
St Monica's College
Strathfieldsaye Primary School
The Patch Primary School
Tooradin Primary School
Western Port Secondary College
Woodleigh School

¹ Although 16 case studies were collected it has not been possible to publish all of them.

² Following the collection of data for the Doveton North Primary School case study, the school has participated in a merger and is now known as Doveton College.

ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

AAEE	Australian Association for Environmental Education
ARC	Australian Research Council
AuSSI	Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative
CC	Children’s Centre
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CERES	Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies
DPI	Department of Primary Industries
DSE	Department of Sustainability and Environment
ELF	Environmental Leaders of the Future
FYA	Foundation for Young Australians
GHCMA	Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
HADDAC	Hawkesdale and District Development Action Committee
HPV	Human Powered Vehicles
ISV	Independent Schools Victoria
MSC	Most Significant Change
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
Ning	Online platform for creating social networking websites
NSSP	National Solar in Schools Program
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
PD	Professional Development
RMIT Uni	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University
ruMAD?	are you Making A Difference? (a program of FYA)
SAKGP	Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program
SCLPfS	School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability
SDCE	Strathfieldsaye and Districts Community Enterprise
SECCCA	South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (formerly WPGA – Western Port Greenhouse Alliance)
SETS	School Environment Tracking System
SRC	Student Representative Council
SV	Sustainability Victoria
TENs	Teacher Environment Networks
VAEE	Victorian Association for Environmental Education
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
YEP	Young Environmental Protectors
YRC	Yarra Ranges Council

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1 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability Guidebook. This Guidebook is the result of a three-year project (2009–2011) exploring the ways in which Victorian schools and communities are working together in partnership to achieve sustainability outcomes.

Schools are being encouraged to undertake partnerships with their community at the national and state policy levels (Department of Heritage and the Environment 2005; Black 2008). There have been several reviews of partnership projects and these have highlighted the many advantageous outcomes and recommended their expansion within Australian schools (ACER 2008; Black 2008 & 2008b; Department of Education, Science and Training 2006; Kilpatrick et al. 2003; Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000; Wierenga et al. 2008).

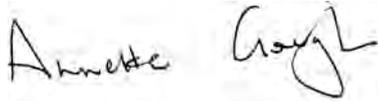
Further support for partnerships has come with the introduction of ‘The Schools First’ national awards program, rewarding existing school–community partnerships and supporting the establishment of new ones (ACER 2008). Partnerships have also been incorporated into the ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic star rating system. To receive their fifth star, schools are required to be leaders working with their community to achieve sustainability outcomes. School–Community partnerships are burgeoning here and overseas (Epstein 2010; UCLA undated; Black 2008; Department of Education, Science and Training 2006).

This Guidebook has been produced from a three-year research project conducted by researchers at RMIT University in partnership with the Australian Research Council (ARC), Sustainability Victoria (SV), Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES), South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA), Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) and Yarra Ranges Council (YRC).

The project involved conducting 16 case studies across Victorian schools, looking at the sustainability partnerships that they conduct with their communities. The schools were nominated by our partner organisations as ones who were already operating successful partnerships.

Our researchers used the ‘Most Significant Change’ technique to gather the case study data, conducting separate focus groups with school staff, students and partners (Dart & Davies 2005). A story was created about what each group thought they had done and the benefits obtained. These stories were then shared between all three groups so that they could see the different perspectives and learn from each other. The results of the combined reflection were written up as a case study story that others could read.

From all of this data we have extracted the participants' advice and recommendations about how to develop and implement effective School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (SCLPfs). That is the focus of this Guidebook – a summary of what practitioners in the field recommend and examples of what they do and how they do it. We hope that you find this Guidebook useful in your implementation of SCLPfs.



Professor Annette Gough, Professor John Fien,
Dr Jose Roberto Guevara, Dr Leone Wheeler and Dr Jodi-Anne M Smith (Chief
Investigators).

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Key findings

There is a wide range of positive outcomes from the School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (SCLPfS) conducted at the case study sites. These include benefits for students, schools, community partners and the environment.

Student outcomes include increased knowledge, skill development, improved wellbeing and personal development, greater enjoyment of school and connection to the community and the environment.

School outcomes include greater innovation in schools, improved building and grounds, enhanced reputation and attraction, strengthened staff relationships and morale, altered staff–community relationships, transition support and improved student attendance and behaviour.

Community partner outcomes include change of practices at home and in the community, enhanced social capital, enhancement or creation of new community facilities and resources; and individual benefits from participation such as having fun, making friends, learning skills, spending time with your children and satisfaction from being able to give back to the school and help the environment.

Environmental outcomes include energy and water savings, reduced carbon emissions and carbon sequestration, habitat restoration and increased biodiversity, waste reduction and waterway protection, reduced pesticide and transport use from growing vegetable gardens, respect and connection with the environment and stewardship for it.

While there are fantastic outcomes from SCLPfS, our research revealed that much of the work is still being done by ‘champion teachers’ in their own time. This leads to the risk of cessation if that ‘champion teacher’ either leaves or burns-out. Consequently, several teachers expressed the importance of succession planning of sustainability roles. At some schools the benefits received from the partnerships has led to an allocation of paid time for the ‘champion teacher’ to coordinate the sustainability activities. Hence, we see a trend of part-time or in some cases full-time ‘Sustainability Coordinator’ roles being established at schools dedicated to SCLPfS. These Coordinators are often given a small budget to support their activities.

In most cases partnership activities are funded either through donations and fundraising or through grants. Grant writing skills were seen as crucial in enabling SCLPfS. Some participants expressed disappointment that their respective State Department of Education did not fund this work, as considerable time and effort is spent in preparing grant

applications that otherwise could be applied to implementing projects on the ground. In some cases multiple grants were required to obtain sufficient funding for projects. Short-term funding added further pressure, as once the original funding ceases, more funding is required.

There is a wide range of partners involved in SCLPfs. These range from family and community members through to local businesses, service clubs and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). In most cases businesses simply donate money or goods. It was rare to see a more in-depth partnership unless there was a clear win-win situation for both parties. In most cases the projects were school-initiated. The school staff and students came up with a project idea and then sought partners to help them achieve their goals. Volunteers were attracted through advertisements in the school newsletter, the school website and word of mouth. The level of volunteers varies from area to area and is a key issue for many projects. Sometimes those who offer to volunteer are the same people who volunteer for canteen duty, sports coaching or other extracurricular activities. Hence ways to broaden the volunteer base was seen as a key issue at many of the case study sites. Some schools planned to approach retirement homes, as they felt many retired people would enjoy helping the children with gardening, cooking and other sustainability-related tasks.

In a few case studies the projects were community-initiated. The schools participated in projects that were coordinated by the partner. Examples of partners and projects include:

- Utility companies assisting schools to run shower head exchanges and shorter shower challenges.
- Local governments facilitating community sustainability education or youth development projects with a sustainability focus.
- Parents focused on sustainability and willing to take responsibility for implementation of activities within the school.

This mix of partners and projects reduces the organising burden on the School Sustainability Coordinator or 'champion teacher' who can focus their time on other tasks.

There are a wide variety of activities undertaken in partnership for sustainability. It can be overwhelming to work out what to focus on or where to start. Each school and their community tend to focus on areas that they are passionate about. For some, it is environmental rehabilitation such as the creation of a wetland, weed removal and tree planting; for others it is creating outdoor classroom facilities in the school grounds such as vegetable gardens, frog bogs, lizard lounges and native gardens; while for others still, it is in empowering the students to share ideas and implement sustainability projects including student action teams, kids teaching kids conferences and student clubs. There are also partners interested in educating the community or creating community facilities such as bike paths, wetlands, improved reserves and parklands. Participants at several case study sites

mentioned the ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic program as helpful in providing a framework and guide for schools in addressing sustainability.

Due to the limited time available and difficulty in obtaining funding, many SCLPfS projects are one-off events to achieve a specific goal such as the creation of a vegetable garden or frog bog. Once the task is completed the partnership ceases. The next time a project is to be done, a call out for volunteers occurs and the same or different partners may get involved. More formal, ongoing partnerships with the community partners initiating, leading or participating in joint decision-making and taking responsibility for task completion are still relatively rare. However, this was seen in a few case studies where the school and community had committed to undertaking large-scale, long-term projects such as the creation of wetlands, eco-centres and gardens, or the establishment of kitchen garden programs. In these cases, partners participate on project management committees and may even take on responsibility for organising and completing some tasks. The rarity of this type of in-depth project is understandable with the current limitations of funding and time available for conducting SCLPfS. These more formal partnership arrangements appear to occur where there is a formal recognition of the importance of SCLPfS by the Principal, which has resulted in allocation of funding and paid time for a Sustainability Coordinator.

Many schools are focusing on embedding sustainability into the curriculum, rather than having it as an optional extracurricular activity that students participate in at lunch-time or after school. Such student environment clubs are fantastic, but there are limits to what can be achieved. The number of students who can participate is limited to those that the 'champion teacher' or Sustainability Coordinator can supervise. Many schools hold elections or have waiting lists for their clubs due to their growing popularity. The club activities are conducted at lunch-time or after school and therefore compete with other extracurricular activities such as sport. Students have to choose which is most important to them. Occasionally students miss lessons so that they can do sustainability club activities. This puts them at a learning disadvantage and it was reported that in some instances students have to make up the lessons they have missed in their own time (for example, one student missed a test and had to sit it at lunch-time).

The extent to which sustainability activities can be embedded across the curriculum depends on the willingness of other teachers in the school. 'Champion teachers' and Sustainability Coordinators are spending much time and effort working on how to embed these activities. As an alternative, a few schools have created a specialist sustainability or environmental science subject that is taught by the Sustainability Coordinator. The Coordinator has each class in the school once a week to do sustainability activities. These are just some of the actions that we have seen in the case studies.

What is clear is that sustainability activities are on the increase and that there are many types of partners and possible projects. It appears unrealistic to expect school staff to be

able to undertake the many tasks involved, including partner recruitment, grant writing and fundraising, project visioning, project management, implementation and evaluation, as well as formalised partnership management. Assistance is therefore needed to maximise achievements from partnerships and to ensure their longevity. Without it we will continue to see short-term, one-off projects rather than ongoing, formalised partnerships. Great outcomes are being achieved but there is the potential for so much more if schools and their communities were further supported. Such support could include providing information to schools about potential partners and potential funding sources, and assisting with these and with partnership and project management tasks. If such support was available, the dedicated and committed 'champion teachers' or Sustainability Coordinators could put their energy into on the ground activities with the students and partners, rather than on these partnership management tasks.

In the literature and in the case studies we are seeing that several local governments are stepping up to provide this kind of 'partnership brokerage' support. Some local governments are organising Teacher Environment Networks (TENs) to facilitate sharing of sustainability ideas between 'champion teachers' and Sustainability Coordinators in their region. They visit each other's schools and undertake professional development training. Some even produce resources for teachers to use. They are even starting to organise sustainability activities for the schools and to manage these projects. This greatly assists the schools to conduct sustainability partnerships and projects. We hope this expanded role of local government is a trend that continues to grow and spread.

We congratulate all our case study schools and their communities for the fantastic work that they have done, and thank them for the insights they have provided by participating in this research project. We hope that their recommendations and our project findings assist schools and their communities to implement effective SCLPfs.

2.2 About this Guidebook

This Guidebook is designed to showcase the partnerships and sustainability activities of the 16 Victorian case study schools and their communities. It shows the fantastic outcomes that have been achieved and provides insight into the methods used to achieve them. Excerpts from the case study stories are included to highlight various points about the design and implementation of effective SCLPfs.

The Guidebook is divided into sections. The first is a brief Introduction (section 1). The second section is a summary of the key findings of Our Research Project (section 2) and outlines the structure of the Guidebook.

At the end of each of the following sections you will find a series of reflective questions. These are included as a way to help you to reflect on the application of the contents to your own school and community partnerships.

Section 3 focuses on Why Partnerships for Sustainability? In it we provide an overview of the outcomes from the school–community partnerships according to the literature, as well as practical examples of the outcomes achieved by our case study schools and their communities.

In section 4 we look at Partnership Approaches – whom the partners are and the roles that they play.

In section 5, Activities and Methods Used, we outline the activities that are conducted in partnerships and the methods used.

In section 6 we describe Roles and Capabilities – the different ways that schools coordinate sustainability partnership activities and what capabilities they say are required to do so effectively. This will include advice on partner recruitment and management.

In section 7 Funding and Resourcing we summarise the many ways that participants in the case studies obtained funds and resources for their SCLPfs activities.

Section 8 will involve an overview of Factors That Make it Easy or Hard – issues raised by participants and their advice on how to deal with them.

Section 9 focuses on Conclusions – What Next? This concludes the guide and explores the future of SCLPfs.

Section 10 provides a range of useful References relating to SCLPfs.

Section 11 includes a range of Appendices, which provide more details about the case study schools and communities involved in our research and the projects that they have completed. There is an appendix listing the sustainability activities completed by year level and subject area. There are also examples of three complete case study stories – one from a child care centre, a primary school and a P–12 school, showing more fully what is being done at a few of the case study schools and how we captured the research data through the ‘Most Significant Change’ story method. All case study stories will be available on the RMIT project website³.

We hope that you enjoy this Guidebook and find it useful in assisting with your SCLPfs. Thank you for your interest in SCLPfs and all the wonderful work that you do for sustainability.

³ <http://www.rmit.edu.au/northernpartnerships/school-community-partnerships>

3 WHY PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

3.1 Literature summary

There have been several major studies into school–community partnerships within Australia in recent years (ACER 2008; Black 2008; Department of Education, Science and Training 2006; Wierenga et al. 2008). ACER (2008) conducted a major literature review of school–community partnerships as a part of the process of developing the ‘Schools First’ Awards Program. They found that:

The literature review indicates that strong partnerships between schools, parents, businesses and local community organisations can make a significant difference to outcomes for young people. While one of the difficulties associated with research in the field of school improvement is that of establishing a causal relationship between a particular intervention and improved student outcomes, the research shows a range of positive outcomes associated with school–community partnerships, including increased skills, greater engagement with learning, more positive attitudes, and improved transitions into the workforce, further education or training (ACER 2008, p.3).

Wierenga et al. (2008, p.13) agree stating: ‘There is now a significant body of evidence demonstrating positive learning outcomes and community change created through effective partnerships between schools and outside interests.’

Outcomes for students include:

- increased skills (ACER 2008)
- improved academic performance (ACER 2008; Black 2008)
- improved attitude and enthusiasm for learning (Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000; ACER 2008)
- improved engagement with learning (Black 2008; ACER 2008)
- improved retention (Black 2008)
- providing positive role models (overcoming ‘...non-academic barriers to learning, such as poor peer relations, family conflict and instability, negative community norms and disorganisation’ Anderson-Butcher et al. in ACER 2008, p.11)
- greater take-up of further and higher education (Black 2008)
- ‘improved transitions into the workforce, further education or training’ (ACER 2008, p.3).

Outcomes for schools include:

- better school attendance (ACER 2008)
- improved student behaviour and discipline (ACER 2008; Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000)
- better quality school programs (Michael et al. 2007 in ACER 2008; Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000)
- 'improved professional working environment (increased challenges and opportunities)' (Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000, p.6)
- 'greater school capacity for innovation' (Black 2008b, p.7)
- improved image in the community (Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000)
- improved relationships with parents (Department of Education, Science and Training 2006).

Outcomes for the community include:

- build community pride and identity (Kilpatrick et al. 2003)
- build social capital (Black 2008; ACER 2008)
- improved local environment (Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000)
- 'learn and gain expertise from students, teachers and experts' (Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000, p.6)
- 'gain kudos for their group or organisation' (Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000, p.6)
- 'follow personal interest in the environment or in the projects' (Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000, p.6)
- 'develop friendships' (Primary Industries and Resources South Australia 2000, p.6).

Recognition of the benefits of school–community partnerships has led to increased encouragement for schools to undertake them.

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century identified as an important strategy the need to further strengthen schools as 'learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community' (MCEETYA 1999). The Future of Schooling in Australia (Council for the Australian Federation 2007) recognised that 'building partnerships between schools, families and the community enhances student learning, values and aspirations' (ACER 2008, p.5).

Department of Education, Science and Training (2006), who report on a national study of 61 school–community partnerships, claim that:

This research shows clearly that the concept of family–school partnerships is an idea whose time has come. Much of the work done in these projects delivered clear educational and social benefits of direct relevance to the lives of people. Yet it is a bold concept requiring substantial cultural change, both within schools and in attitudes to schools. Generally speaking, this cultural change is only just beginning. A long journey lies ahead if it is to be accomplished widely, but the educational and social goods demonstrated by many of the projects examined here suggest that the journey is well worth making. (Department of Education, Science and Training 2006, p.6)

It is our hope that this Guidebook helps make that journey easier for schools and their communities to undertake.

3.2 Case study outcomes

There was evidence of a wide range of outcomes from the School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (SCLPfS) conducted at the case study sites. These outcomes included benefits for the students, the schools, the community partners and for the environment. Multiple benefits resulted from the projects, as will be demonstrated in the following examples taken from the case study stories.

3.2.1 Student outcomes

These are the types of student outcomes that were seen in the case studies:

- Skill development (Leadership, communication, problem solving, project management, interpersonal and teamwork skills, consultation.)
- Improved wellbeing (Confidence, self-esteem, empowerment, pride and satisfaction, healthier eating and exercise levels.)
- Knowledge (Reducing environmental impact and restoring environment, growing vegetables, water testing, tree planting, soil testing and much more. Deeper understanding of concepts taught in other subjects.)
- Enjoy school more (Have FUN! Want to be there. Tell others about it.)
- Connection to the community and environment (Positive role models, awareness of career options, ability to enjoy nature.)

Example of skill development and personal development outcomes – Mill Park Secondary College (combined story)

There are two main dimensions to the learning outcomes of the activities of The Lizards. Firstly, there are the vocational and practical skills. These include hands-on skills such as water testing and monitoring, learning frog calls, building and maintaining vegetable gardens, improving habitat for native wildlife and so forth. The use of outdoor environments allows students to access experiential learning practices, and broadens their social

awareness and awareness of local geography and ecosystems. There are also the higher level skills such as the skills involved in organising their own conference, learning to organise and teach other students and teachers, presenting at conferences and elsewhere, making submissions to council and much more. Many of the students are also involved in using online social networking tools for sustainability blogs and other purposes, allowing both development of online skills and creativity.

Secondly, there are other learning outcomes that relate more to the personal development of the students as leaders and as role models. The group is divided into various teams and each team has a leader responsible for coordinating the team's activities. The teamwork dynamic is embraced by the students and the leadership role allows an even greater level of responsibility. There are in fact a range of leadership opportunities in the work of The Lizards. In addition to self-esteem, pride, and a sense of accomplishment, confidence building is also important, as the students are encouraged to present work at conferences and speak at assembly. As community member Chris observes, "It's giving them a sense of achievement and fulfilment...because they're actually able to have some meaningful action on what they've been learning".

Example of skill development and wellbeing outcomes – Montrose Primary School (student story)

As the students reflect on how it feels to take on a special role such as Inspiration (or any other sustainability related role within the school, e.g. Compost Monitor, Green Genie), they all agreed that it made them feel happy and good about themselves. Jessica mentioned that it also meant that your peers trusted you, "You might feel glad or happy that people have chosen you and you feel like people trust you and like you. So you'd feel pretty happy". Tom agreed and says it also helps you to develop another important life skill: resilience. As Tom stated, "It makes you feel happy if you get one [a role] that you really, really wanted; but if you don't get it you'll have to be resilient". Asked what he meant by being 'resilient' he went on to explain, "Well you just keep on going with your life, you don't be sad about it. You just forget about it and keep on going". ... Kurt went further to explain, "I've been an Inspiration for one year...I didn't get picked this year but it's okay with me because other people can have a shot and learn more stuff because I'm mostly aware of all the stuff".

Example of knowledge and attitude change outcomes – St Jude's Primary School (staff story)

Kathy adds, "Now I find that if it rains – they don't really want to grizzle too much because they know it's filling up those tanks. When the students say their prayers now, they're more inclined to be thankful all the time for rainy days rather than think I can't go out to play".

Example of enjoyment of school outcomes – Strathfieldsaye Primary School (student story)

Also every day when I come back home my mum and dad will just say, oh what would you be doing and before I'd always say, oh not much you know, but now I tell them everything that we've been learning. I even tell my friends, other friends that don't go to this school, and I tell my cousins. My cousins' mums always ask, "How's school?" and I say, "Oh it's great we're learning all this fantastic stuff".

Example of enjoyment of school outcomes – The Patch Primary School (student story)

Callum explained if Michelle wants some measuring done, “then all the kids want to measure it and they don’t really know that they’re doing maths but they actually are”. Another student added, “You don’t realise that you’re learning something because it’s so fun”.

Example of empowerment / behaviour change outcomes – Western Port Secondary College (student story)

This has strengthened her determination to speak up about sustainability initiatives. Tarsha said, “Just kind of knowing that you’re doing the right thing; say a year ago my friends would drop rubbish and I’d look at them and disapprove and I wouldn’t say anything. But now when they do it, I’m like, pick it up, the bins just there, you’ve got legs, move [laughs]. One did today, my friend dropped it and I was like, pick that up and he did. So I mean it might seem like I’m being mean; but then they think you know; it gets into their subconscious, one more person on board”.

Example of deeper understanding of concepts taught in other subjects – Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

From an educational perspective Jean explained that the outdoor activities help students to understand the application of concepts they learn in class. She said, “To watch them with levels and all that was really good. They really got it. It was like oh, suddenly all this maths over the years makes sense. Now I know why I need tables”. Hannah added, “One of the boys said that to some parents recently. He said ‘I now understand the maths. If I do it in a textbook, I don’t understand it, but by doing this task I do’. He spoke really articulately about it.”



Figure 1: A VCAL student enjoying the College’s outdoor activities

3.2.2 School outcomes

These are the types of school outcomes that were seen in the case studies:

- School functioning (Innovation and passion, financial savings on energy/water bills, improved buildings and grounds.)
- Reputation and attraction (Student attraction, awards, grants, approached by partners, media coverage, seen as leader whom other schools follow and may change their practices.)
- Staff relationships and morale (Social interaction during working bees, satisfaction and morale boosts at receiving grants/awards.)
- Staff–community relationships (Improved during environmental projects, flows into other areas, provides opportunity for non-academic involvement with the school.)
- Transition support (Kindergarten to school to workforce or further study.)
- Student attendance and behaviour (Improved attendance and behaviour, chance for non-academic kids to shine and improve retention, students more engaged with practical, outdoor activities and able to apply concepts learnt in other classes, for example maths.)

Example of inter-school relationship outcomes – Mill Park Secondary College (staff story)

Lorna also observes the Environmental Education Officer, who facilitates the TEN meetings, is keen to encourage and facilitate inter-school networking. This complements the enthusiasm of the students in the environmental club to engage with like-minded students from other schools. Lorna feels positive about the move toward enhanced school cooperation, noting that nearby schools – traditional rivals – are becoming connected through the environmental activities such as the student conference, “so it’s breaking down barriers as well now”. There are important linkages being formed between state and private schools also. These small steps are working towards enhancing and building community strength and identity, which can be difficult to achieve in sprawling, outer suburbia such as Mill Park. Lorna tells us, “I love the idea of the Whittlesea schools getting together. I like that as a development. That to me is really progressing”. She observes that as a result “the kids feel stronger...but it’s also the teachers at the school as well”.

Example of transition support outcomes – St Monica’s College (combined story)

The environmental context has also had the social benefit of helping primary students in their transition to secondary school through their connection to older students and the wetlands. For example, some of the students who are part of ‘enviro friends’ who went to St Peter’s remember the trees they planted whilst in Grade 6. “Moving to high school’s such a big step...but when you’re familiarised with the place...it becomes a more friendly environment. Then you care about it more and you want to keep it clean...you want it to be a safe environment and a friendly place.”

Example of staff and staff–community relationship outcomes – The Patch Primary School (staff story)

Staff developed closer relationships through being involved in working bees. Normally they are so busy at school they don't have time to stop and chat, but during working bees they can relate more socially. Likewise it has improved teacher–parent relationships. Lynne said, "It sort of lifts barriers and you're communicating not as the teacher, but more as a friend. It's lovely". Sophia agreed, stating that after building stronger connections with parents at working bees she found them then willing to come in and assist with art classes or donate materials for art.

Example of student attendance and behaviour outcomes – Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

Hannah highlights: "One thing that's worth commenting on is that with some of our most difficult and dispossessed kids when you get them involved in projects in the Outdoor Classroom or other initiatives under the umbrella of sustainability, they come into their own and they're brilliant. They're everything they are not in a classroom: focussed, responsible, self-reliant, and it challenges some of the really academic kids because they're out of their comfort zone.

"I went to some Professional Development recently where the presenter talked about getting into the pit to really have effective learning, where you have to be taken out of your comfort zone and challenged, and you have these academic kids who have had continual success all their lives, they always do well, but you take them out of there into the outdoor classroom where they have to dig holes and use concrete, and all of a sudden they're floundering and they have to learn be part of a team. So we've seen kids who are really on the edge in terms of whether they'll last at school and they've worked – they've even got up and spoken."

The teachers of the primary school students who have been involved have also been amazed at the transformation in behaviour of their 'difficult' students.

3.2.3 Community outcomes

These are the types of community outcomes that were seen in the case studies:

- Change of practices at home and in community (Students apply it at home, spread it to others in the community, for example vegie gardens, energy and water saving.)
- Community facilities and resources (Cycling and walking tracks, wetlands, forests and gardens, sporting facilities.)
- Social capital (Increased connections and relationships, sense of community, ownership and trust.)
- Individual level (Have fun, make friends, learn skills, spend time with my children, get satisfaction from helping the environment and by giving back to the school.)

Example of change of practices at home and in community outcomes – Altona North & Altona Meadows Children’s Centres (staff story)

All of these small changes or practices are being modelled and discussed with the children daily and taken home by the children too. For example, one two year old advised her mother not to tip the waste water down the sink, but put it on the vegetable garden. Parents are discussing sustainability and adopting practices to make their family life more sustainable. Also, they participate in the changes, for example donating waste materials to the centre that then return home again reused in creative ways by the children. ...Parents are now choosing natural outdoor play-spaces; natural or recycled play materials over plastic; and cloth nappies.

Example of change of practices at home and in community outcomes – Balnarring Primary School (combined story)

Some now have timers in the showers to help them and the other members of their families limit their showers to four minutes. They turn off lights sometimes at the annoyance of those still in the room! They recycle waste food and packaging. They have established vegetable gardens and compost heaps. Some have altered the way their gardens are watered. While some limit the time they play computer games or watch TV so that they save energy. Some play outside more. And some collect computer paper that has been printed on one side and use the other side to draw on. These are just some of the activities being undertaken in their homes.

Example of social capital outcomes – Doveton North Primary School (community story)

According to the staff of Myuna Farm and the volunteers who work with the Rainbow Garden at Doveton North Primary School, the most significant change that has come out of the school’s partnership with the farm and the creation of its garden has been the strengthening of bonds and trust within the local community. Because Doveton is a low-income area, many residents are transient, renting in the area before moving on. It is also a highly multicultural area. These factors make the task of community building difficult. The partnership has made a difference to the community by strengthening young people’s ownership of their school and local area. One immediate effect of this has been seen in the reduction in vandalism, which had been severe during the early days of the garden’s establishment. It has also made a difference by bringing the practice of sustainable gardening from the farm and the school into the homes of the community as children asked their parents “why can’t we have a veggie patch?” When a garden competition was held through the Neighbourhood Renewal program in 2008, a number of parents “had fantastic vegetable gardens themselves in their backyards”.

Example of individual outcomes – Montrose Primary School (community story)

The veggie patch and Green Genies play important social and inclusive roles for both students and the parents. For example, parents and grandparents who join the Green Genies and offer their gardening expertise have an alternative and non-threatening way to engage in the life of the school community. Parents that may not be comfortable with volunteering in the classroom for educational type activities (such as reading) often feel that the sustainability initiatives, for example the veggie patch, offer opportunities “to come in and spend time with the children”. Lee explains that the sustainability initiatives provide a

focus for community to contribute as well as feel part of the community. Sandra explains, “People say, ‘Gee, isn’t helping on things at the school a bit of a drag?’ I say, no I like doing it. What else am I going to be doing? I do my home duties. I don’t work. So I like going to these meetings and feeling that I can be in some way of a help to the school and to the community”. Lorraine joins in, “Once people realise that it’s so fulfilling, I think they get a taste for it and they realise it’s so social as well...it’s a way of making friends”.

Examples of community facilities and resources outcomes – Hawkesdale P12 College (combined story)



Figure 2: Hawkesdale students by the school’s drought-tolerant garden

In particular, the Hawkesdale and District Development Action Committee (HADDAC) and the Moyne Shire Council together with young people and teachers from the school have worked on projects in the township that are focussed on improving the local parks and reserves (Apex Park, the Recreation Reserve and The Common), so that locals and tourists alike can enjoy them. Young people became involved as representatives on the Moyne Youth Council and the Moyne Shire’s Our PlaYce Project. Three eventually became members of HADDAC. Through participating in these organisations young people have designed a recreational reserve sign promoting the clubs and users of the Recreational Reserve; worked on the design of a rotunda and an interpretive sign on the history of the area, and contributed to the design of the playground and BBQ at Apex Park.

Example of social capital and change of behaviour outcomes – Port Fairy Consolidated School (combined story)

One day the students of PFCS made red lentil soup. Kirsty thinks it must have been a popular recipe because when she went to the supermarket they were out of red lentils. The people at the supermarket said to her that it had never happened before – they had never run out of red lentils. This is but one example of how the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program (SAKGP) has influenced the culture of the school and the community. ...Many family-orientated activities are encouraged and sharing a meal is a great way of

bringing people together. The children also learn about feeding a family in tough economic times. The school fed an entire school population of 250 children on dhal and roti bread at a cost of \$50. The inspiration came from an Indian family, where the mother willingly shared her traditional recipes and knowledge of spices with the children. The whole school contributed towards making this multi-cultural lunch.

Example of change of practices at home and in community outcomes – Tooradin Primary School (combined story)

The school staff surveyed families at the end of last year to determine the impact of the [SAKG] program. They found that children were eating healthier. They now ate vegetables that previously they wouldn't eat. Some had started growing vegetables at home. Some families were now cooking and sitting down together to eat their meals more than they had previously. Parent shopping habits had been altered as well – for example students now want to make muesli bars at home and grow fresh herbs not buy plastic wrapped ones. One student whose family was sick cooked for them for a whole week while they recovered! The program will be expanded in Term 3 to offer cooking classes for parents and community members.



Figure 3: Tooradin students enjoying the school's fantastic kitchen garden

A lot of the SCLPfS literature focuses on the environmental, school and student outcomes from participating in partnerships. There is relatively little known about the reasons for partner involvement, and how best to meet their needs and to increase their involvement. This is an area for further research in SCLPfS.

3.2.4 Environment outcomes

These are the types of environment outcomes that were seen in the case studies:

- Energy and water savings (Reduced usage, efficient equipment, building design, use of rain water and solar power.)
- Reduced carbon emissions and carbon sequestration (Walking, using school buses, bike tracks, and Human Powered Vehicles, and tree planting and recovering wetlands.)

- Habitat restoration and biodiversity (Revegetation, nesting boxes, wildlife protection.)
- Waste reduction and waterway protection (Litter reduction, nude food and rubbish free lunches, community stormwater education.)
- Vegetable gardens (Reduced food miles, pesticides and packaging.)
- Respect and connection (Ownership, less vandalism.)
- Stewardship (Further study, careers, educating others.)

Example of carbon sequestration, energy and water saving outcomes – Balnarring Primary School (community story)

He adds it [the wetlands] went from an idea in 1993 to being “nine hectares altogether and four hectares under vegetation”. This makes Balnarring Primary “... the only carbon sink school in Victoria, it’s sticking away more carbon than it’s emitting”. Cassy describes how “there’re three different wetlands now plus a small dip net pond and they’re all various ages because it’s just grown again but it’s great, fantastic habitat and fantastic biodiversity”. She also told how the drain from the shops and roads nearby has been basically turned into a creek that drains into a swale filtering the water before it enters the wetlands. Rainwater from the rooves is collected in tanks and used in the school for flushing toilets and the evaporative air-conditioners. Overflow water from the tanks enters one of the wetlands via a swale constructed by the students. With all the various initiatives the school has done they have been able to reduce mains water usage by an impressive 95%.

Example of waste reduction and waterway protection outcomes – St Francis of the Fields Primary School (student story)

Most of them were very specific about the change they had observed both in the school and in the nearby creeks. Sam said that in the school “our bins aren’t getting as full lately”. Anna added that the “bins used to have to be emptied every day - the wheelie bins, like, the ones out in the yard. But now they only get emptied every couple of days or so”. Plus, “there’s not as much rubbish on the ground because we take containers and take it home,” was Sam’s observation. Louis added that, “we’ve seen a big change from our creek last year from a couple of years ago until now. It’s a lot cleaner and more animals”.

Staff member, Grant, agrees. “I reckon the biggest change I’ve seen physically is the waste. We have had an intense and persistent management of the waste problem with the ongoing aim of just constantly improving it. We’ll never be perfect at it but it’s really noticeable to me. It was only last year – if you were here last year or the year before – you could look out any window and spot 20 items of rubbish on the ground, and now it’s difficult to find one some days which is a huge change.”

Example of habitat restoration and biodiversity outcomes – Woodleigh School (staff story)

Every year Woodleigh holds a specific environmental event called Bush Week where speakers are invited to the school, often ex-students...Bush Week has a long tradition over the last 30 years, where each of the Homesteads go out into the local community, i.e. local park/reserves, to do weeding or planting, rubbish pick up or listen to someone talk about the place. The intention is that each of the Homesteads do community service and develop a relationship with that place and the people involved with it over four years while in Senior School. The local areas with which the Homesteads have had a relationship are:

Langwarrin Reserve, Balnarring Beach, and Sunshine Reserve. The teachers also mentioned that when the students went on their Homestead camps there is a growing encouragement [for the students] to do some sort of community service while on camp. For example, there are beach camps at Walkerville and Barwon Heads where the kids are involved in beach clean ups, planting, fixing tree guards, and dune restoration activities. These camps give the students the opportunity to have a really positive relationship with the natural environment, which [the teachers] presume will have an effect on them in later adult life.

3.3 Reflective questions

Answering the following questions provides an opportunity for you to reflect on the material covered in this section of the Guidebook and its application to your current or desired SCLPfs.

Who are your sustainability partners?

What activities and projects have you done together?

What are some of the outcomes of the partnership (student, school, community and environmental)?

What methods have you used to capture them? How have you collected the quantitative and qualitative data about your activities and their outcomes?

How do you communicate and share your outcomes with those involved and with the wider community?

If you are not yet implementing SCLPfS but would like to, you can use these questions to help with project planning. For instance what are your most desired outcomes? This will affect which type of activities you choose. Section 5 provides some insight into what activities lead to which outcomes.

4 PARTNERSHIP APPROACHES

4.1 Who partners?

Many environmental education developments are best achieved through collaborative action with the local and broader community. This might include partnerships with educational organisations, local councils, businesses, industry and community groups and networks.

(Department of Heritage and the Environment, 2005, Educating for a sustainable future: A national environmental education statement for Australian schools, p.12)

There is a wide range of partners in School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (SCLPfS). In the case studies partners included:

- Families (parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles)
- Community volunteers (retired people, people who were passionate about the project focus)
- Community groups (Scouts, Landcare, Historic Society, Rotary, Men’s Shed, Community Gardens, Correctional Services Teams)
- Service providers (Energy, Water, CERES, Planet Savers, Carbonetix)
- State government departments (Sustainability Victoria, Department of Human Services, Environment Protection Authority, Department of Transport, Department Primary Industries, Catchment Management Authorities)
- Parks or gardens organisations (Royal Botanic Gardens, Parks VIC)
- Not-for-profit organisations (Foundation for Young Australians, Community Gardens Organisations, Greening Australia, Environmental Education in Early Childhood VIC)
- Local government (Development Action Committees, Environment Officers)
- Higher educational institutions (TAFEs, Universities)
- Health organisations
- Business (nurseries, hardware, BHP, quarries, restaurants, utility companies, environmental consultants)
- Other schools

4.2 Roles of partners

Partners can undertake a wide range of roles in SCLPfS, which according to the data from the case studies can be summarised into four main categories.

- Partners donate money, goods, time and skills
- Partners participate on a management committee

- Partners are responsible for some tasks
- Partner initiates and leads a project in which the school participates

4.2.1 Partners donate money, goods, time and skills

Partnerships may be one-off roles, such as helping to plant trees in the dry creek bed or long term, ongoing roles such as being on the committee to oversee the newly implemented Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program.

(Tooradin Primary staff story)

This is by far the most common form of partnership. Community members volunteer to help with tree planting, gardening, cooking or other activities. These activities are school-led and partners are invited to assist. Multiple partners may be involved in a single project.

Tooradin Primary School (staff story)

When they wanted to create the dry creek bed they had local businesses, such as Bunnings, Flemings Nurseries and Mansfield Propagation Nursery, donate trees. They also had a wide range of partners assist with planting the trees and landscaping the area. This included parents and grandparents, staff from Bunnings, a team of Conservation Volunteers Australia and a Correctional Services team. Every student in the school planted at least one plant so that they would feel ownership and pride in the dry creek bed.

In the case of business, donating goods or money seems to be the main way that they participate in SCLPfs. In this sense it is more of a transaction than a formal partnership. In exchange for their donation they get a thank-you letter and certificate, a mention in the school newsletter and possibly the school website. The businesses get to list their donation in their annual reports and show that they are good corporate citizens. This is the benefit they get from the partnership. There were only a few instances where business partnerships had more depth and were ongoing. This occurred with utility companies and sustainability consulting companies whose core business includes sustainability initiatives. Western Port Secondary College has a strong, ongoing partnership with two sustainability companies – Carbonetix and Planet Savers Australia.

Western Port Secondary College (community story)

The partnership has continued well beyond contractual arrangements, with both sides seeing benefits from participating. Bruce and Mark have been able to test different technologies and programs in Western Port Secondary College and appreciate the feedback they receive. This has helped them to refine the services that they offer. They also use the graphs showing what Western Port Secondary College has achieved in their presentations to other schools to show what is possible and to promote the use of the School Environment Tracking System (SETS). Together with Hannah, the Assistant

Principal of Western Port Secondary College, they have also presented at conferences and events such as the Toolbox for Environmental Change and Sustainability Forum.

There are several factors that have led the partnership to continue and to it being a deeper interaction than Bruce and Mark have with most other schools. One factor is that their companies are based locally. They have been involved from the start with Western Port Secondary College and are keen to carry on, as the College is willing to continue improving its practices. They said that Hannah uses the SETS environmental tracking program to its full potential adding data regularly. Few other schools are doing this. As a result Hannah was able to discover aberrations in energy and water use in the data and investigate the reasons for this. For example, this led to the identification of a major water leak. They have been able to watch fluctuations in energy use associated with building works and see that it returned to normal after the building works ceased. This has helped to demonstrate the benefit of using SETS.

From the College's perspective, Hannah explains that they have benefitted from having consultants she can trust to give her advice, who she knows will provide ongoing customer support, helping when the equipment needs adjustment. She adds, "They understand that we can't just shut down the school to install a new meter during work hours. And they're very sympathetic to our needs and working within the constraints of being an operational school". She said they have been able to save significant amounts of money from reducing energy and water use and that the College now has a strong reputation as a sustainability leader. She really appreciates being able to call Bruce and Mark whenever she needs advice or encouragement.

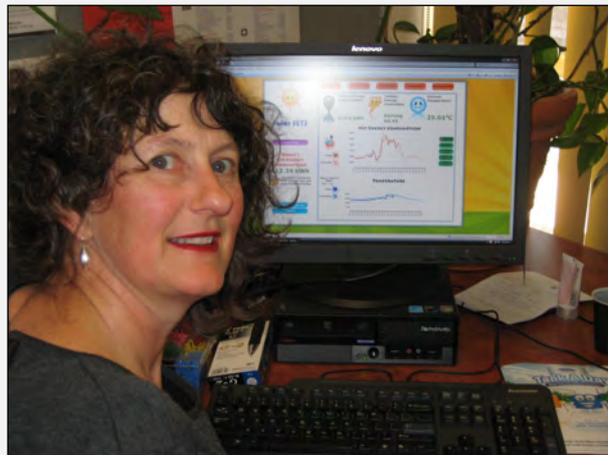


Figure 4: Hannah using the Solar SETS program, which shows her exactly how much energy their panels are producing at any time during the day

In 2011, Hawkesdale P12 College established a partnership with Leighton's Constructions, supported by the Beacon Foundation. Leighton's Constructions are contractors for the Macarthur Wind Farm, which has commenced installing wind towers for what will be the largest wind farm in the southern hemisphere, about 12km from the school. Year 10 students are mentored by Leighton's employees and will have opportunities for site visits, work experience and traineeships. Vestas, who manufacture the wind turbine blades, have visited the school for presentations about renewable energy technologies and how the wind farm is constructed. The school was also granted funding, as part of the Macarthur Wind Farm Community Assistance Fund, to build a new primary playground. We trust that this will be an

ongoing partnership that will perhaps lead to tertiary scholarships for renewable energy technologies and environmental engineering for our students in the future.

4.2.2 Partners participate on a management committee

Another role that partners play is participating on the school's environmental committees or management committees that oversee large, long-term projects.

Balnarring Primary School (staff story)

Heather explains, "The wetlands committee was always a very broad based committee right from the word go. We had staff, we had parents, we had people from within the community who had no association with the school at all, who had a commitment to what we were doing down there in terms of habitat creation. And we've still got that along with our commitment to it as a wonderful education resource". ...Cassy got involved in 1994 when she didn't even have any kids. She joined the Wetland Management Committee and the nursery that she worked at propagated many of the thousands of plants that have been planted in the wetlands. Cassy is still involved today.

Montrose Primary School (staff story)

As past and present members, the teachers strongly identified with the school's Environmental Committee. Its membership incorporates both parents and teachers with further input from other partners such as the Shire of Yarra Ranges and students, particularly through student groups such as Green Genies and Inspirations. The committee generally meets monthly and produces a newsletter *Environmental Matters* that is distributed within the school community. This newsletter is a critical communication tool that also fosters school–community learning partnerships for sustainability with invitations to join in sustainability activities.

4.2.3 Partners responsible for some tasks

In this role partners actually take on responsibility for organising and implementing some of the tasks associated with the SCLPfS.

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

It took two years to construct the eco-centre, which is still evolving. Although Michelle said that she felt like a sole carer initially, now there is a strong Garden Team consisting of staff, parents and community members, that do fundraising, organise three to four working bees a year, organise events and the pickup and delivery of donated materials. They do the correspondence too, including thankyou letters to donors and try to keep everyone informed about what is occurring with the garden and eco-centre. The team members give their time, and share their skills and knowledge doing gardening, construction jobs and landscaping. There is a high level of trust and Michelle has been willing to step back and let others have ownership.

4.2.4 Partner initiated project in which the school participates

The final role that was seen throughout the case studies was partners actually initiating and leading the project. This occurred where there were parents willing to initiate and manage

projects within their local school or where the schools decided to participate in projects run by partners.

Montrose Primary School (community story)

...parents took a lead and ramped up sustainability initiatives in 2002. Lorraine says that, “it was all parent driven from the beginning because the teachers had so many other pressures on them...it was the parents that actually came together”. A few key parents with an interest in the environment in the Parents’ Club, which is the major fundraising body of the school, started to get together to raise funds for sustainability initiatives. ... So the parents nurtured the sustainability related initiatives at Montrose Primary School with the establishment of the veggie patch where the student helpers became known as Green Genies. ...The Green Genies are involved in tree planting, mulching, gardening, watering and weeding activities. Sandra, who has two children at the school, has taken on the role of Assistant Treasurer as well as helping out with the student club Green Genies.

Strathfieldsaye Primary School (staff story)

The school had been working a lot on conserving water for a while, but it didn’t feel that those behaviours were flowing out into the community. That was until the drought more or less forced more to happen at home in terms of saving water. About the same time the school worked with Coliban Water to undertake a challenge for students and families to shorten shower times. The students collected data, which made the curriculum activity very powerful. ...“There were some considerable savings in the household water use through just that shower one. That was huge when kids calculated how much they saved.”



Figure 5: Illustration by Simon Kneebone inspired by the tree-planting day organised by the Strathfieldsaye and Districts Community Enterprise. Students and teachers from Strathfieldsaye PS and St Francis of the Fields PS attended to celebrate the stories collected as part of the research project.

Tooradin Primary School (combined story)

Students have helped design and build the Human Powered Vehicles (HPVs) with the aid of teachers and parents, such as Kelly’s Dad. The old HPVs were made from recycled paper and cardboard along with parts recycled from bicycles and other equipment, but recently the school has purchased two new frames and have been busy doing the final construction work so that they are ready to race. Many local businesses sponsor the project or provide parts. Examples include P&A Automotive, Gendore, Foodworks, T&J Butchers, Bendigo Bank, City of Casey, M.J. Cabinets, Balla Balla Lions Club, Tooradin Sports Club, and P&P Products.

The HPVs are raced at meets with other schools around Victoria. Students have participated in the Casey Fields Cardinia Cycling Festival in Cranbourne, the Wonthaggi HPV Grand Prix, the EIEP Maroondah Grand Prix, and the RACV Energy Breakthrough in Maryborough. Chloe proudly states that “we do a really good job; we don’t put each other down and we work as a team”. The students who attend the HPV races are required to give presentations about what their school has done. They talk about how the vehicle was made, how it saves energy and keeps them fit and healthy. Marj adds that the program also builds students’ confidence and self-esteem as well as their leadership, teamwork, communication and social skills. Due to the popularity of the program at Tooradin Primary the local high school initiated a HPV program. Recently the high school has added a junior team to their HPV program.

4.3 Reflective questions

Answering the following questions provides an opportunity for you to reflect on the material covered in this section of the Guidebook and its application to your current or desired SCLPFs.

Who are your partners?

How have you worked with these partners? What roles has each played?

Who else would you want to partner with and how would you approach them?

Are there any sustainability-focused companies near you? Can you see any potential win-win opportunities for partnering with them?

Consider contacting your local utility companies to see what educational resources and programs they offer to schools. Would it be beneficial to your students to incorporate activities such as shorter shower challenges, showerhead exchange programs and home energy audits into your SCLPfS activities? Utility companies may offer such programs.

Do you know what role or level of interaction your partners want to have in your SCLPfS? Have you had a conversation about it? Ideally this should occur in the project-planning phase so that the project can be jointly designed to meet as many needs as possible.

5 ACTIVITIES AND METHODS USED

5.1 Activities

There is a wide range of activities undertaken in School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (SCLPfs). Examples of activities being undertaken at the case study sites are:

- Audits in home or in the community
- Biodiversity in school grounds
- Charity – collect donations
- Climate change play (drama performance)
- Concrete couches
- Conferences – kids teaching kids
- Eco-Centres
- Energy-related activities
- Environmental rap music
- Festival – community education
- Frog Watch
- Garden & vegetable garden
- Human Powered Vehicles (HPV)
- Making bird nesting boxes
- Mural in the school grounds
- Outdoor classroom
- Primary school education day
- Resource Smart AuSSI VIC
- River detectives program
- Rubbish free lunch
- Stephanie Alexander KGP
- Sustainable transport
- Tree planting
- Waste reduction – recycling & composting
- Water Watch
- Wetlands

While there are multiple benefits from the activities undertaken in SCLPfs, the ratio of benefits varies depending on the type of activity and how it is conducted.

5.1.1 Environment benefit focused activities

In these partnership activities, the principal benefits focus on the environment, for example tree planting, weed removal and biodiversity initiatives.

Hawkesdale P12 College (combined story)

Britt described working with Year 7–9 students on a biological control for bridal creeper using leaf hoppers and rust. The students released the leaf hoppers in the culvert area to control bridal creeper. This project was sponsored by the Department of Primary Industry (DPI) who provided a Perspex cage and other equipment.

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)

The children also get involved in other significant community projects, in particular, the partnership with the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to save the habitat of the orange-bellied parrot. The school has planted 15,000 trees this year towards creating this habitat. DSE was very supportive and encouraged the children to hold an orange-bellied parrot conference. Other schools were invited to hear about the plight of the parrot and what the children have done to help with habitat restoration. The children also protect other endangered species, in particular the hooded plover. The children make little shades to protect the nests.

5.1.2 School and their students benefit focused activities

In these partnership activities, the principal benefits focus on the school (for example, enhancement of facilities and grounds) and their students (for example, outdoor classrooms, cultural exchanges, kids teaching kids conferences).

Altona North and Altona Meadows Children's Centres (combined story)



Figure 6: Staff and children at Altona North Children's Centre have planted a patch of inviting green grass for the children's outdoor play. It is kept green and lush with the help of their water tanks.

About four years ago the impact of the drought on the outdoor play space became evident. Staff and children were in the outdoor play spaces every day and it was tangible and powerfully visual for everyone. The play spaces were once green with grass and then, due to lack of rain, water restrictions and the high daily usage by children, they just became bare dirt. It was a social topic of discussion for both children and staff supported by the general media messages about water conservation.

The children viewed old photographs of the green play space and some would not recognise it and questioned where had all the grass gone. They readily made the connections between the lack of rain and plants dying and just this year the discussion extended to bushfires too. The staff were uninspired by the dirt play space, yet highly valued outdoor play. They offered children the choice to play indoors or outdoors every day and wanted to provide the best play opportunities possible, but the dirt, particularly on windy days, was a problem. Also, the outdoor equipment quickly became dirty and worn and pot-holes in the dirt were a health and safety issue identified by the department. The

children were also tripping on the emerging mesh that had been under the original grass and parents made complaints about children falling on the hard dirt. All of these concerns led to the general redevelopment of the outdoor play spaces over several years, including installation of water tanks and native planting.

Balnarring Primary School (staff story)

For the last year there has been a focus on the creation of the Bimblemeer Sustainability Area, which was officially opened on 4 Dec 2009. Bronwyn has been on the Sustainability Committee overseeing this project and is amazed at what has been achieved by the dedicated group of school and community volunteers involved. “To think that a year ago this was a fenced off pile of weeds, and now look at it! And that’s all community involvement, unpaid work that has created what’s down there. There’re now fruit trees. There’s a garden bed for every year level. There’s an animal shed. There’re tanks. To think that a year ago it was nothing but grass and weeds, that’s huge”. Natalie agreed saying it is common, “... to see the kids dragging their parents or grandparents around there”. Heather loves seeing the joy the kids get doing what they’re doing in the wetlands and the Bimblemeer Sustainability Area. “They love that area, they just love it.”

St Jude’s Primary School (staff story)

“We’re a Travel Smart school, we’re one of three schools in Langwarrin working with the Department of Transport with Frankston City Council and Peninsula Health and a couple of other local agencies in trying to decrease the traffic on Warrandyte Road which the three schools are on. But, the angle we took was environmental, we certainly want to cut the car fumes, but we also want to get our children active...so we’re having kids bike, scooter and walk, part, or the whole way, to school.”

Woodleigh School (staff story)

There is also an indigenous exchange program with Yirrkala in Arnhem Land and Woodleigh, where a group of students go to Yirrkala and Yirrkala students come down to Woodleigh and are billeted for a couple of weeks. There is another Indigenous exchange with Amplitiwatja, northeast of Alice Springs. A past Woodleigh student is actually working at Amplitiwatja with the Indigenous community.

5.1.3 Community benefit focused activities

In these partnership activities, the principal benefits focus on the community (for example, the creation of new community facilities).

Hawkesdale P12 College (combined story)

In particular, the Hawkesdale and District Development Action Committee (HADDAC) and the Moyne Shire Council together with young people and teachers from the school have worked on projects in the township that are focused on improving the local parks and reserves (Apex Park, the Recreation Reserve and The Common), so that locals and tourists alike can enjoy them. Young people became involved as representatives on the Moyne Youth Council and the Moyne Shire’s Our PlaYce Project. Three eventually became members of HADDAC. Through participating in these organisations young people have

designed a recreational reserve sign promoting the clubs and users of the Recreational Reserve; worked on the design of a rotunda and an interpretive sign on the history of the area, and contributed to the design of the playground and BBQ at Apex Park.

Strathfieldsaye Primary School & St Francis of the Fields Primary School (community story)

They identified the construction of the sporting facility on the Recreation Reserve as a significant achievement of the Community Enterprise, as it was the lack of community facilities that motivated the formation of the Enterprise five years ago. Amazingly, it is this same facility that is now continuing to keep the community connected. However, Keith added that aside from the sporting facility, the Community Enterprise has also managed to secure five to six acres of regrowth bushland that has contributed to the development of a 1.5 kilometre walking track and the creek land trail pass. It provides access for many of the kids who live on one side of Strathfieldsaye safe access through to the school area.

5.1.4 Partner benefit focused activities

In these partnership activities, the principal benefits focus on partners – assisting them to achieve some goal/outcome or providing them with a service (for example, recycling, repair work and maintenance, biodiversity enhancement, education).

Woodleigh School (staff story)

There is also an initiative which started at the end of last year where years 10 and 11 students who have finished the set curriculum for the year but the school year has not finished, can do community service camps. Last year a group went to King Lake to work with one of the fire affected primary schools for 4–5 days. Another group went to work with asylum seekers in a refugee centre in Dandenong; and another group went to Hattah-Kulkyne National Park near Mildura to work with the rangers. Woodleigh already has a strong relationship with Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, as the Year 10 Outdoor Education Program students have an expedition which takes place in the park and some kids have gone back to contribute by doing things like painting signs, tracking goats, and clearing rubbish for the week.

5.2 Methods used

A wide range of teaching and learning methods are used in SCLPfs. In the case studies we saw:

- Home audits
- Reflective diaries and journals
- Blogs, wikis and online student congresses
- Kids teaching kids
- Student clubs
- Student led learning and action teams managing projects
- Embedding activities into the curriculum
- Community education
- Participating in partner programs

5.2.1 Home audits

In these activities students are required to go home and audit what occurs in their home.

Balnarring Primary School (combined story)

David has designed his science program around sustainability. It includes assignments where students investigate practices at home and how they could be improved. He called this “selling do-able things to kids to sell to their parents” such as reducing energy use, reducing water use and starting a compost heap.

5.2.2 Reflective diaries and journals

Reflective diaries and journals can be used not only to engage students in sustainability activities but also to engage parents.

Altona North & Altona Meadows Children’s Centres (staff story)

A much loved teddy was patched by the children and became ‘Recycle Ted’. ‘Recycle Ted’ and an accompanying diary went home with a child each week for parents and children to add written or visual entries about what recycling Ted did with their family. As each successive family took ‘Recycle Ted’ home, parents became more aware and shared recycling ideas through the diary.

Doveton North Primary School (student story)

Students have learnt how to grow fruit and vegetables. They have learnt how to test the soil and plant from seeds. They have learnt garden safety. They have also learned how to manage the garden in an environmentally sustainable way. This involves saving water and using rainwater, introducing a composting system that uses worms and mulch and knowing about the kinds of insects that are good for the garden. These experiences are captured in each class’ garden diary, in which they record their learning from each session that they have in the garden. The diary shows students what they’ve learned and how they’ve improved as gardeners. It also reminds them that there is more to learn if they are willing.

5.2.3 Blogs, wikis, online student congresses

Blogs, wikis and online student congresses can be used as ways for students to reflect on activities undertaken, to share their learning with others and to deepen their understanding.

Port Fairy Consolidated School (student story)

After the students have worked in the garden or on other environmental projects they can post to an ‘enviro blog’ on the school website, they can take photos and create a personal reflection and a photo story.

5.2.4 Kids teaching kids

The use of ‘kids teaching kids’ has become very popular. In the case studies there are many examples of kids teaching kids within the same school, as well as between schools.

Kids teaching kids in the same school:

Doveton North Primary School (staff story)

Another strategy has included encouraging Years 3 and 4 students to showcase the Rainbow Garden to Years 1 and 2 students “to establish good caretakers” for the future.

St Francis of the Fields Primary School (student story)

Sam described how, “each year we have an environmental planting tree day. So we get with our buddies and we go around the place where some plants have been planted and the space where they haven’t been planted”. Anna added that the “grade sixes teach their buddies how to plant a tree and the next year they’ll know how to do it”. Hannah emphasised that for the first time the “grade fives taught the grade ones because grade fives have buddies this year as well”. Keisha suggested that this system works because, “they like learning it off someone else older than them”. Sam confirms this, “so it’s the same as the teachers doing it, like, kids teaching kids”. They elaborate that this buddy system is not limited to the environmental activities but cuts across art and computer classes as well.

Kids teaching kids between schools:

Mill Park Secondary College (combined story)

The students in The Lizards ran their own sustainability conference attended by various schools from the region. The foundation of the conference was an opportunity for student-to-student learning and teaching. The students have also attended several sustainability-oriented conferences outside of their school including the recent Youth Conference in Canberra. In addition to activities around the schools grounds and in the community, Lorna and her students have also run a conference at the school targeting fellow secondary school involvement. However, due to high demand from primary schools to be able to participate, the conference was opened to grade 6 students who could then take what they had learnt back to present to the students at their schools. Lorna, the teacher facilitating the club’s activities, was quick to point out that the conference was the outcome of the students’ initiative and enthusiasm, noting that, “the kids ran it”.

Natalie describes the student-to-student knowledge sharing in the conference, “they all showed...what they were doing at their school and learnt from others to take back to their school”. Steph saw the highlight of the conference as the opportunity to “trade ideas”. The students are involved in a range of hands-on activities in the local community, often in collaboration with other primary and secondary schools. They also ran a primary school education day where local primary schools were invited to come along and primary students were taught by Lorna’s students how to monitor water and other activities. Members of the public walked through to observe the activities and join in, Lorna noting that, “the kids got so much out of that”.

As Nevin describes the conference experience, “we went and we learnt from other students and we also taught other students about what we do...showing them how to test the water and stuff like that...so that’s really fun because we learn a lot and we also get the experience of teaching others”. The importance of the hands-on approach is also clear from Steph’s comments about the first conference they attended just as observers, and how frustrating it was to not be fully involved, “we weren’t teaching other kids stuff that we knew

and it was really frustrating, like we didn't get a chance to tell our opinion and our stories". Nevin adds, "we really wanted...to be the ones up there speaking down to everyone else".

St Monica's College (combined story)

St Monica's has established a strong working relationship with St Peter's, a neighbouring feeder primary school to St Monica's, which has been established through involvement in the wetlands project. Paul – the sustainability coordinator – and students from St Monica's have worked with seven groups this year using an 'enviro-buddies' system. All grade 3s from St Peter's visited the wetlands at St Monica's for lessons on how the wetlands work and the types of plants which make up a wetland. This was followed by another lesson where the students buddied up with either a Year 10 or Year 8 student where the older students taught the primary students about plants and the root system followed by a planting session in the wetlands. There was also another program with Grade 6 students from St Peter's who were mentored by Year 9 students from St Monica's as part of their 'Uniquely Year 9' initiative. As with the Grade 3 students, the Grade 6 students were given three lessons based on the wetlands: about the wetlands, tree planting followed by a summary lesson on their activities and learning.

Strathfieldsaye Primary School (staff story)

The indigenous plant seedling propagation program has also forged some other community links that are curriculum related. An ex-student, now in Year 11 at Bendigo Senior Secondary, has been assisting the Year 3-4s with propagating the seedlings as part of her studies. So it fits both the primary and secondary school curriculum.

Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

The concrete couches project is a great example of secondary students showing primary school students what can be done. The College's students have visited six local primary schools and taught the younger students how to transform old lounge chairs into concrete couches to be used for outdoor seating. They have also built a pizza oven and cast concrete bowls at primary schools. It started out of a year 9 art class. It's been so successful that Haydn and Lachlan attended the Order of Australia Awards to collect the Silver Award for the project. They have also spoken about it in front of 60 people at the Shire's environmental forum and they continue to make more couches at more schools.

5.2.5 Student clubs

It is very common for schools to have an environment or a sustainability club that students participate in voluntarily. A wide range of tasks is conducted in these clubs.

Balnarring Primary School (combined story)

From grade 3 on those students that want to can join the Balnarring Environment Action Team (BEAT). They volunteer their time to undertake a wide range of sustainability activities such as planting fruit trees, vegetable gardens, collecting food scraps from classrooms to create compost or feed the worm farms, and looking after the animals – chickens, guinea pigs, rabbits, turtles, budgies, and goats – in the new animal shed.

Balnarring Primary School (staff story)

Heather adds, “Yeah, and I think it’s made them realise, too, that things like this don’t happen by magic, though. If you want them to happen you need to make it happen. Some days we have our meeting and I’ll say, we’re not doing anything exciting today; we’re just carrying buckets of chook poo and mushroom compost. But this is a really important part of what we do so off you go. So they’ve realised that it’s not always bells and whistles. Sometimes it’s just damned hard work”. The results add up and the kids don’t seem to mind the work. The BEAT club has younger students keen to join as soon as they reach Year 3.

Mill Park Secondary College (staff story)

Lorna has observed that the only time teachers are ever critical of her activities is due to the students being taken out of classes to participate in the club's activities. This highlights the inherent difficulty of having these activities added on top of the curriculum rather than embedded firmly within it. As the Lizard's activities are additional programs, which can cut into regular class time, students who participate are sometimes disadvantaged. One example is a student who was made to sit a test during her lunch break to make up for a missed class spent with the environmental club.

Montrose Primary School (community story)

The Green Genies are involved in tree planting, mulching, gardening, watering and weeding activities. ... She explained that the students do this during Thursday lunchtimes. Students are allowed from all grades (Prep-6). They get a name tag and a green apron to wear which helps to identify them but also keep their clothes clean. The number of students involved varies throughout the year. Some students come regularly whereas others may come only once or twice. When they have some flowering plants to be planted numbers soar as this is an activity the kids love. At the end of the year they have a Green Genies Party and all who have been involved at some point in the year are invited. They keep record of who comes and how often so that if there is a special event to attend, those that have done the most, are invited to it. Once a month or so they will have a raffle for a box of fruit and vegie produce and everyone gets excited (students, parents, teachers) in the hope that they will win the box of fresh produce!

The Patch Primary School (student story)

They also told us about their role in the Young Environmental Protectors (YEP) where they teach the younger kids about environmental issues and encourage them to participate in the Rubbish Free Lunches. Amy explained: “We go around to their grades just once a week and sometimes we eat lunch with them and we put it into games so we can get them to learn in a fun way.” Another student said that, “When we have the rubbish free lunch we all go around and we empty out the rubbish bin and we check if they’ve put all their rubbish and compost and recycle in the same bins”. Even the staff bins get checked. The YEP students then tally the results and determine which class has done the best. That class gets a reward such as a Free Dress Day. The students had to apply to be in the Young Environmental Protectors (YEP). They had to write a letter explaining why they want to be in it, what ideas they have. Then Michelle and Sophia, teachers, read these and choose who can participate.

5.2.6 Student led learning and action teams managing projects

Another technique used is student led learning where teams of students plan and implement sustainability focused projects. This is sometimes done as a part of the student environment club, like at St Jude's, and sometimes it is done as a part of the curriculum, like at The Patch Primary.

St Jude's Primary (combined story)

Another example of the improvements that the ELFs [Environmental Leaders of the Future] have made is to their bike storage area. The students noticed that very few people were riding their bikes to school. They decided to upgrade their bike storage facilities so that the bikes could be locked up safely. They discussed their ideas, sought approval for the changes to be made from staff and then took the action required. The result has been an increase in the number of students cycling and scootering from just three or so a day to over 25 a day. A small group of students has responsibility for running the bike storage area, including unlocking and locking it each day, and other activities such as designing competitions for who rides the most to school. The students explained that the benefits of the bike shed extended beyond the safety of their bikes and scooters. They told how it meant their parents drove less and this meant less pollution and damage to the ozone layer. It also helps them keep healthy. The students have now made further modifications in recognition of the fact that so many people are using scooters. ...The students organise a wide range of events like "Ride to School" day and 'Walk to School' day to increase health and wellbeing.

The Patch Primary School

Now that the garden and eco-centre are established all grades have lessons there. They are also involved in planning new areas using student led learning approaches. For instance grade 3-4s are restoring a site creating a living landscape. They have used the same planning process, consulting with all students in the school about what they want. Grade 5 students are developing a fire retardant garden. Grade 6 students are creating tree trails, special places in nature where they feel a connection. They design games and activities to teach the younger kids about their chosen tree and its lifecycle. (Staff story)

The students explained that the garden is always evolving. They talked about the tree trails they're now doing. Callum said, "It's an activity we do, the tree trail. It's been developed over two years and we choose a tree in the school grounds. It can be out of bounds though and we connect with the tree, like we learn its biology and how it grows. We make activities for the little kids". Kyle added, "when we do the tree trails the adults are just there to supervise so we have to organise the activity, organise the day, organise all the stuff that we need". Amy explained the purpose of the tree trails: "it's kind of our place, like a place that we connect to and we just get to try and make it better in a special way". Callum continued, "And then we get to share that with the kids that are lower than us and we get to make up activities, games and prizes with the games and all that and we just try and help raise awareness through those games as well". (Student story)

St Jude's Primary School (combined story)



Figure 7: ELF's by the school's chicken coop

They formed a Student Action Team to think about ways to get rubbish out of the school. They brainstormed and came up with ideas under the 4 Es – engineering, education, encouragement and enforcement. Under 'engineering' they came up with a designated lunch area so wrappers get put in the bin and not littered in the yard. They also ensured there were plenty of rubbish bins strategically located in this area. Each class was rostered on to yard duty after snack and lunch and were required to pick up at least five items of rubbish. Wednesdays and Thursdays became rubbish free days. Under 'encouragement' they came up with the idea of awards. The Environmental Leaders of the Future (ELFs) talk at assembly every Friday and they give out ELF awards. Students get awards for not dropping rubbish at school. Under 'education' classes learnt about recycling paper, cardboard and drink bottles and about what scraps you could feed to the worms and the chooks. They came up with the idea of a little book for 'enforcement' but that did not work so well, and they learnt from this it is better to encourage people through rewards.

5.2.7 Embedding activities into the curriculum

The level of embedding sustainability activities into the curriculum varies from school to school. At some schools a 'champion teacher' coordinates the sustainability activities largely outside of the curriculum through a student environment club. At other schools there are a few teachers willing to embed activities into their subjects. While at a couple of schools there is a major focus on sustainability, either embedding it across all subjects or exposing the whole student population to it through a specialist subject.

Embedding into existing subjects:

Balnarring Primary School (staff story)

David has designed his science program around sustainability. It includes assignments where students investigate practices at home and how they could be improved. He called this "selling do-able things to kids to sell to their parents" such as reducing energy use, reducing water use and starting a compost heap.

Mill Park Secondary College (staff story)

Some examples of the kinds of collaboration Lorna is achieving with fellow teachers include the art teacher planning a mural project regarding waste in the school grounds, the music teacher involving the kids in creating environmental rap music, and the woodwork teacher taking on a project for the students to make nesting boxes with a pattern provided by the zoo. Additionally, Lorna collaborated with the [Physical Education] PE teacher to come up with a play on climate change for the students to present at a conference. "...showed the kids, they loved it, they added their own bits and we ran that as our workshop".

Montrose Primary School (community story)

Sustainability initiatives are now also strongly connected with, and planned for, in the school's curriculum programs. They choose a focus each year such as water, energy or recycling. Last year it was recycling and students visited Eltham Business Centre, they also visited an environmental farm to look at the waste practices there. Lee reports that they try to work the activities into their integrated units. For instance the grades 3 and 4s visited the rain forest in Warburton when studying rain forests. When the students did the nest boxes this was a part of their science classes. They also did a computer project doing photo stories on the nest boxes. Claire adds that the students have had classes on water health in conjunction with Water Watch at the Reserve. They've also learnt about indigenous vegetation and mapped the weeds. They then removed the weeds to see what vegetation was left, "So it was like taking the classroom into the reserve". Lorraine reports that the outdoor activities are great for those boys that are really difficult. These activities are also generally cost free which makes it appealing for parents. It also enables teachers to meet their requirement to have a community-based program within their curriculum. So it's a definite win-win!

Embedding into specialist subjects:

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)

In 2007 PFCS employed an environmental science teacher to provide the deep scientific knowledge and teaching that would underpin the practical environmental initiatives. The environmental science program has continued to evolve and students across all levels of the school participate in inquiry-based learning. PFCS has combined the environmental programs and infrastructure to develop 'Our Sustainable World', which provides the framework for curriculum, community, infrastructure and sustainable practice. The environmental education is an integral part of integrated inquiries. Lindy indicated that the school was lucky to have a fully qualified environmental science teacher on staff (Tracey). The children have one hour of environmental science per week across the school and integrated inquiries are linked to the rest of the school. For example, next term the inquiry is Life be In It. The children will investigate healthy lifestyles and what it means to live in a coastal place. Tracey is very knowledgeable and has a speciality in marine biology. The science the children are doing is incredibly sophisticated for primary school children.

St Francis of the Fields Primary School (staff story)

Grant Shannon's role involves "managing the farm and the property, but it also, probably more importantly, involves having a lesson with each class in the school once a week". He

has a weekly 45-minute session with each class. While this may not seem long enough, “it’s 45 minutes more than every other school that I’ve ever seen. It gives me the chance to coordinate the whole school around these aims, goals and practices and projects. That’s the crucial factor here I reckon – just the fact that my role exists. ...So we’ve set up a new curriculum next year and a whole new model that we’re going to trial for this Environmental Ed next year. We’re hoping that that will allow us to go into much greater depth with the curriculum. Instead of a class having one lesson a week, two classes will come down to a double portable down there and they’ll stay for five weeks. Every day that’s where they’ll have their school and the entire curriculum will be embedded in this environmental setting that we’ve got.”

The Patch Primary School (staff story)



Figure 8: Hands-on, outdoor learning is an important element of education at The Patch Primary

Michelle is the sustainability specialist teacher at the Patch. She has each class once a week. The students were active participants in designing and developing the garden. The students researched garden designs and developed some individual and team plans. They then built models of their plans using kitty litter, sand, gravel, bark, twigs, clay and blue glass. Michelle took them through a project design process to develop their preferred garden layout. All grades used their maths skills to measure the garden site using footsteps, knotted string and tape measures to create a scale-based plan. They also used string lines and laser levels to calculate the slope, with their final calculations falling within 30cm of those of the professional surveyors. Michelle told how she would modify the way lessons were conducted to suit the grades. For instance with Grade 1s doing site surveys on soil pH, Michelle talked about soil magic and the opening and shutting of doors for plant food to be able to come in and out to the plant. The students conducted the chemical tests and compared the results by matching it up with a colour card. With Grades 4 to 6, they understood the pH scale so she could use more technical language.

Embedding across the curriculum:

Doveton North Primary School (staff story)

At the same time, the school is creating a sustainable curriculum, which will engage all teachers across the school and all year levels from Prep to Year 6. This sustainable curriculum is informed by a sustainability committee that includes community members.

St Jude's Primary School (staff story)

For her: "The most significant focus of my teaching is incorporating the practice of sustainability into the curriculum. Knowing that it's there and that it's part of our scope and sequence and we're going to always keep touching on it and building on the understanding." Indeed to ensure that happens the sustainability focus is embedded into their 2-year cycle of review of curriculum units.

5.2.8 Community education

Several schools are extending their sustainability education beyond the students and their families to the wider community.

St Francis of the Fields Primary School (student story)

Keisha gave a detailed description of the plastic bag initiative. "During the year we've been doing stuff for plastic bags. We've been knocking on people's doors and telling them about the litter that's going down the drains and we've been spray painting logos that explain this idea. After that we went to IGA. Some students made little cardboard signs, like little drink coasters that were intended to stick on car steering wheels and house exit doors so people would be reminded to take their green bags to the supermarket. We wrote on them – don't litter and remember your green bags. Then we gave them away when people signed the form saying, 'oh yeah, it's a great idea to have green bags'. Some people said no because they like plastic bags and they reuse them and stuff." Another student added that "some people were, like, mad because they thought if they got rid of that they wouldn't be able to put anything in their bins as bin liners". However Hannah explained that, "They just need convincing to say it is easy to do but they think it's just going to take too long and it will never work. But it will. They just need to be told it will. They've got to believe in it".

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)

The message of how committed the school is to being sustainable is also sent to the community through participation in several community markets on the weekends. For one of these markets the students made curries from cauliflower and spinach from the garden. The display was set up at the town's village green and the children sold the curries in banana leaves. People could choose where to put their waste – feed the chooks, the worms, or the compost. The only part of the meal that used food miles was the banana leaves. Kirsty is now thinking about planting some banana trees so that the school has its own supply of banana leaves. They are constantly thinking about improvements. They do not cook anything where they use disposable cups, for example, soup. The community markets are very successful – the school always makes some money and sends a strong message to the community about how committed they are to being completely sustainable.

...With the next community market, the children will continue to inspire the community and get the community involved more. It is a wider community connection; it provides a few hundred dollars that can go back into the kitchen. The priority is for the children to have that experience. They are the best people to tell the community about their work. The last one was so successful the school will ensure that they are involved in at least two markets per term.



Figure 9: Fresh produce from the Port Fairy Consolidated School's Kitchen Garden

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

The school held an event last year as a part of the 'Inspiring in Spring Dandenong Ranges Garden Festival' where community members could tour the school's garden, do activities such as painting pots, propagating plants, building a bush tepee, and making a scarecrow. There were four free lectures as well. One was on growing green roofs. Another was on the story of the development of the school's garden and eco-centre. Another was on designing children's landscapes. The fourth was by Andy Laidlaw, the landscape architect at the Royal Botanic Gardens who talked about their Children's Garden. This was a community-building event that invited people not normally associated with the school to visit. Angie said that the "school should be providing education for the whole community" and was keen to see more of this. They will hold a similar event this year as a part of the Garden Festival.

5.2.9 Participating in partner programs

Another method used in SCLPFS is for the schools to participate in projects that the partners initiate and lead. This requires less effort from the 'champion teacher' or Sustainability Coordinator at the school, enabling them to use their time on other tasks. Below is an example of a project coordinated by local government. Appendix 11.6 details a full case study from Hawkesdale P-12.

Balnarring Primary School (staff story)

Jessica explained that last year the [Mornington Peninsula] Shire ran a series of community workshops called 'Climate Change Conversations' which attracted over 3,000 residents. Students from Balnarring Primary presented at some of these conversations sharing what their school had achieved on sustainability. Jessica wanted to highlight that the schools are well ahead of the rest of the community. She said, "... that was the key thing that most of the participants said they appreciated the most, the passion and the drive in the schools,

and the achievements”. On the flip side, Jessica said, “that whilst our generation recognise that we need to do some things, there’s still that expectation or investment in the young people, that they’re the ones that need to make those changes. So there’s probably a bit of scapegoating going on from that community or that parent generation. The kids are doing it, so we’re okay”.

5.3 Reflective questions

Answering the following questions provides an opportunity for you to reflect on the material covered in this section of the Guidebook and its application to your current or desired SCLPfs.

What is the most successful partnership activity that you have been involved with?

Why do you think it was successful?

What outcomes resulted?

What activities and methods were used?

How can it be improved? What other outcomes can you foresee?

What is the major benefit focus of your current or desired SCLPfS activities? Are they predominantly: Environmentally focused (for example, tree planting, weed removal and biodiversity initiatives)? Student focused (for example, outdoor classrooms, cultural exchanges, kids teaching kids conferences)? School focused (for example, enhancement of facilities and grounds)? Community focused (for example, creation of new community facilities)? Partner focused (for example, recycling, repair work and maintenance, biodiversity enhancement, education)?

What methods and activities are you currently using in your SCLPfS?

If you were to expand the activities you are doing, what would you be interested in doing? (You may wish to contact some of the case study schools that are doing your desired activity and ask further questions and for advice. An appendix is included that summarises which schools are doing which activities.)

What do you need to do or obtain in order to undertake the expansion that you are interested in?

What is a simple first step you can take in the next few weeks?

6 ROLES AND CAPABILITIES

6.1 Staffing

In most of the case studies, we found that the work was being undertaken by ‘champion teachers’ on a volunteer basis. Some were given a few paid hours a week in which to do their sustainability tasks, but they often spent much more time on the tasks than that allocated.

While some teachers work alone, it is becoming more common for a range of staff to be interested and involved in sustainability activities within a school. Hence the champion teacher’s role is expanding from ‘organiser and implementer’ of sustainability activities with the students, to ‘coordinator’ of sustainability activities conducted across the school by a range of staff, and coordination of the curriculum review process to embed sustainability within it.

This coordination role is often recognised by the Principal and some teachers are provided with budgets to support their work. A few schools even have a full-time Sustainability Coordinator.

6.1.1 ‘Champion teachers’

Montrose Primary School (staff story)

Julie continues to explain that the pivotal role that Lorraine plays has changed over time, as once it was voluntary but now they’ve found some funding to support the coordinating and leadership roles she plays. “There were a few staff members, but Lorraine was usually the driving force, even with community meetings.”

Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

Hannah replied, “You have to have key staff who are prepared to put in above and beyond what they normally do. I mean Jean was driving the projects in the primary schools and finally we decided to give a very small time allowance to that role, but you need the support of curriculum people and the support of admin. If you don’t have the support of your principal class you just can’t do it, because it really is a job beyond what you do. You get back from investing your passion, but the workload is huge”.

6.1.2 Sustainability Coordinators – part time

Balnarring Primary School (staff story)

Heather is paid one day a week as a Sustainability Coordinator to write grant applications, coordinate activities and help make it all happen. She emphasises that “it’s so important that if schools are serious about it, they need someone who’s out of the classroom. That’s the only reason I can do what I do, because I don’t have a class responsibility. If you’ve got responsibility for a class, you don’t have the head space, you don’t have the time for all this

other stuff”. Those teachers that are committed to it often end up doing it during their own time. Heather said that “The Department gets a lot of unpaid work out of its teachers for achievements in sustainability”.

Mill Park Secondary College (staff story)

Lorna is currently the cement holding the various partnerships and activities together, and hence the successful networks that have built up are clearly vulnerable to her departure. As such, she has begun to train up a fellow teacher who could effectively take over in the case of Lorna no longer being able to continue the activities.

St Jude’s Primary School (combined story)

There is an allocation of time for a Sustainability Coordinator and also the Kitchen Coordinator. Rod was the inaugural Sustainability Coordinator and has now handed over the role to another teacher who is also planning to link sustainability to art. Rod identified that transition and succession planning is important. The dedicated position enabled time to be devoted to successfully applying for grants for the solar panels and rainwater tanks.

6.1.3 Sustainability Coordinators and Specialist Teachers – full time

It is becoming more common for schools to have full-time sustainability coordinators or specialist teachers. It was mentioned earlier – under the methods used, embedding sustainability into the curriculum section – that there are full-time specialist teachers at The Patch Primary, St Francis of the Fields Primary and Port Fairy Consolidated School. This is also occurring in other schools not involved in our research project.

It is interesting to note that Michelle at the Patch Primary also started out in the library and was able to generate some successful sustainability projects, such as turning a degraded dam in the school grounds into a wetland, which in time led to the formal recognition and expansion of her sustainability role.

6.1.4 Engaging other school staff

Ideally a range of staff members within the school will be involved in the sustainability initiatives and partnerships. This makes it much easier and reduces the workload on the ‘champion teacher’ or Sustainability Coordinator.

Mill Park Secondary College (staff story)

Lorna believes the key to these successful collaborations is through direct conversation and approaching colleagues to help out, noting, “it’s not actually that difficult if you have the conversation”. She also points out that “it’s really showed me that’s what you have to go back to really; it’s personal conversations”. Lorna estimates about a quarter of the teachers are usually willing to support her in any way. Outside of this core group of teachers, other teachers are usually willing to help out when approached, observing that “even though not everyone’s doing something, nobody’s working against me”. ...What is perhaps clear then is the need for someone like Lorna to be reaching out and making those intra-school connections with colleagues across various disciplines, urging them to become involved.

Lorna has clearly been quite successful in gaining a high level of commitment within the school. What Lorna also highlights, is the cumulative nature of her achievements in gaining support from her colleagues noting, “at first it was few. But they’ve seen the successes with the kids and how positive the kids are and they’ve seen changes”.

St Jude’s Primary School (staff story)

Their capacity was also strengthened by having a range of passionate staff members committed to embedding sustainability into the curriculum. They have done so in a range of topics including science, maths, history and literacy. Rod said, “It’s active, hands-on, real life learning”.

6.2 Partnership recruitment

6.2.1 Recruitment methods

An ongoing challenge in any School–Community Learning Partnership is the recruitment of partners and volunteers to undertake the various tasks. In most instances in the case studies the projects were school-initiated and partners were recruited through newsletter advertisements. The result being that the most common partners were parents and other family members.

School newsletter:

Montrose Primary School (staff story)

As Amber explained, projects such as the Frog Bog, Veggie Garden and the Chicken Coop were done “just with parent volunteers”. The teachers have come to draw from the experience and expertise of their parents to help build their vision and ideas of working towards sustainability into reality. As a project was identified, a call out via the newsletter would seek out help and experience. For example, for the Frog Bog project “things [were put] in the newsletter...someone had an excavator, so he came one weekend and excavated the whole lot,” said Amber. Ken continued to describe the effort, “He worked in creating wetlands or something; that was part of his job. ...He came and gave a talk to some of the kids”. In this project the parent provided his service without cost and the “Shire came to the party with all the plans,” explained Amber. ...“And the kids will volunteer their parents. I think the kids volunteering their parents is more, like, you can write in the newsletter until you’re blue in the face, but then, when the kids say, ‘My Dad does this’, and then the parent has to come up with the goods. It might not be straightaway but it will eventually happen.”

6.2.2 Expanding the volunteer base

One challenge mentioned by some of our case study participants was the limited volunteer base. They explained that often those parents that get involved in sustainability activities are the same parents who volunteer for other extracurricular activities such as reading, canteen duty and sport coaching. Hence their involvement in sustainability activities may lead to a

further need for volunteers in the other areas. Finding ways to expand the volunteer base is a key issue for implementing SCLPfs.

Doveton North Primary School (staff story)

Future plans for the partnership include extending the network beyond parents and into the community. This has been a challenge to date. While the school had some success engaging parents in initial working bees to set up the Rainbow Garden and although it set aside a specific area for the local community, subsequent attempts at engagement have not been successful. This has had a lot to do with the limited capacity of the local community: “We tend to seem to have the same old people. People who would come up for reading will be the ones who help out and they’re stretched, a lot of them are stretched. They just can’t do any more.” As the same teacher explains: “They love the idea but it’s just stepping in and doing it. ...It’s the problem with all schools – getting that community behind you, the volunteers coming. When you go along and see Stephanie Alexander and what she’s done at Collingwood it absolutely blows your mind away as to what they can do, but it’s so dependent on volunteers. It just doesn’t work unless you have a huge bank of volunteers to help you.”

Port Fairy Consolidated School (community story)

One issue is that the pool of community and parent volunteers remains quite small. This is a potential weakness for improving or expanding school–community partnerships for sustainability. In addition, the small volunteer base means that activities such as the Kitchen Garden Program often draw volunteers away from other duties such as staffing the school canteen. Extending the volunteer base of the school is highlighted as one of the important next steps the school must take. Trudy believes the potential is there, noting that there are lots of older people who love gardening and cooking, who would be great to have involved. In addition to drawing in more non-parent volunteers, Trudy notes that the school is also currently moving to change the school–parent relationship in order to gain a larger parent volunteer base. There is now an expectation that parents should be involved in at least one fundraising or community connection event per year.

6.2.3 Factors affecting the number of volunteers

The number of volunteers seems to vary from community to community. In the case studies where there appeared to be more volunteers it was suggested that this may be the result of certain factors, including:

- being a rural school with strong community networks
- being located in a place of natural beauty
- being located in a development corridor
- having an inspiring vision or a popular program that people want to be a part of.

Rural communities:

Hawkesdale P12 College (combined story)

Networking is very strong in this community. People in small communities often wear

multiple hats. Frank is a teacher at the school and also the secretary of HADDAC. Don is a teacher at the school, but also passionate about waste management in the region. Britt as the environmental science teacher at the school has good links into environmental networks such as Hopkins-Moyne Landcare Network, the Victorian Association for Environmental Education (VAEE), the Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE), DSE and the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (GHCMA), and Geraldine is the link with the Moyne Shire. HADDAC is also connected to the school because some members are on the staff. The current chair of HADDAC is involved in Landcare and his wife is a staff member at the school. HADDAC's secretary Frank and his wife are both active HADDAC members and staff members at the school.

Tooradin Primary School (community story)

Parents see it as a “caring, country school” connected to the community. “Everyone sort of gets interlinked, so you get to know everybody. When you go into the newsagent’s, Di’s passing you buckets, and saying that you could use these at school. She knows that you belong at school or you belong at kinder. It’s like that in all the shops, it’s as if everybody is linked together and belonging to the same club.”

Places of natural beauty:

Tooradin Primary School (community story)

Parents reported that many in the local community “have that connection to the land, connection to the earth”. There are many farmers and fishermen. “If they don’t do it as a career, they do it as a hobby.” It was suggested that the beauty of the natural environment around Tooradin makes it easier to focus on sustainability. “...We’re just in a beautiful setting. We’re near the water, we’ve got lots of trees, we’ve got beautiful yards and beautiful gardens, it’s just a beautiful place to be.”

Development corridor:

Strathfieldsaye Primary School (staff story)

As Greg comments about the changes that have occurred in the community: “We were lucky enough to have a semi-green field site to start with. There was still plenty of ‘air’ to develop parts of Strathfieldsaye – to manage the development rather than retrospectively trying to fix it. So I think it was that proactive view about how would we as a relatively young community – about to go through the next phase of growth and development – would manage that.”

Strathfieldsaye Primary School and St Francis of the Fields Primary School (community story)

They explained that the nature of the Strathfieldsaye community contributed as much to the development of this unique community partnership. They identified that having become the growth corridor of the region, the nature of the population that had moved to the area can

be characterised as young, mobile and well educated. Furthermore, having a key number of individuals willing to step forward and work were factors that contributed to the success of the Enterprise.

An inspiring vision or a popular program that people want to be a part of:

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)



Figure 10: Port Fairy students keep the kitchen garden looking its best

Many of the volunteers expressed interest because the program was the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program and many had never had any association with the school in the past.

The Patch Primary School (community story)

Rosie who joined in 2006 said the motivation comes from Michelle's vision and leadership. She's been the driving force behind it. For her, seeing someone with a vision follow it through was inspirational. She also wanted to learn more about the garden and meet new people. "Plus there was wine and cheese at every meeting!" Rosie felt that, "If you want to live in a community, the more you give, the more you get back. It's that sense of - well I think most people who do it, do it because they enjoy what they get back from it".

6.3 Partnership management

Teachers found that it takes time to build partnerships and that people need to feel invited and welcomed to join in. They need to have clear roles, so that they feel supported and productive. Some partners also like to feel they can have input into the design of the activities, and not just be told what to do.

6.3.1 Welcoming culture

Doveton North Primary School (combined story)

The school has adopted a philosophy of community involvement in education and an open door policy for parents and extended family. The community partners testify that the school

“has always been community focused”. One who has been involved with the school since her children attended it nearly 30 years ago says: “It’s always been parents, community people, popping in and out, helping, doing things and going onto whatever else they want to do. You don’t have to have a child here to be helping here.”

The Patch Primary School (community story)

The school has an open welcoming culture. Parents are allowed into classrooms to assist with reading. The staffroom is open to the public and the Principal’s door is always open. Michelle doesn’t dictate, she empowers us to make decisions and organise activities. It’s an active role not a passive one. That makes us want to be involved. It’s our school. Rosie expressed it this way, “You feel at home in the school yard here”.

6.3.2 Educating new students and their families

Montrose Primary School (staff story)

Julie also said it was important to encourage parent participation, “The [sustainability] team always tries to plant seeds in the parents’ minds too: that we’re a sustainable school, and gives them ideas of how they can help support us and stuff from the very beginning”. Creating a culture of sustainability with families, particularly as new families join the community, is a significant strategy used by the Environmental Committee, as Amber explains, “there’s a flyer that goes in the information packs so that every parent coming in knows, if they read the information pack, they know what we’re interested in, and what we expect”. As Julie adds, it is about developing the school’s sustainability “ethos” within the community.

6.3.3 Clear roles and activities

Tooradin Primary School (staff story)

Kristie explains the importance of designing your initiatives so that it’s easy, fun and beneficial for the community to participate. She emphasised: “... there’s nothing worse than a parent or a grandparent coming in and their time wasted... You really have to have clear guidelines as to how their time’s going to be used. They feel valued then because they’re safe and secure, they know – whether it be by written instructions or a debrief beforehand – that they’re absolutely clear on what’s required, what the procedures are and what’s expected. It’s just an enjoyable experience working alongside the children and being involved.”

6.3.4 Input into designs

Balnarring Primary School (community story)

In addition to the wetland area the focus of community members has recently expanded to the development of the Bimblemeer Sustainability Area. Fred has been involved in the construction of the large animal shelter / chicken coop, which they designed themselves. Mandy appreciates the fact that they don’t use off-the-shelf designs and that the community members are given the opportunity to have input into the designs. Mandy adds that the creation of the garden has been really huge for her too. There are now vegetable beds for every year level.



Figure 11: Balnarring students by the entrance to the school's Bimblemeer Sustainability Area

6.3.5 Appreciation and recognition

It is important to appreciate and recognise regularly the efforts of all volunteers and partners involved in the sustainability activities. This does not have to be an elaborate act; simple gestures help to boost motivation and commitment to the partnership and its activities.

Altona North and Altona Meadows Children's Centres (staff story)

At Altona Meadows Children's Centre staff are rewarded by the 'green frog' with chocolates and at Altona North Children's Centre a 'green fairy' rewards staff with chocolates.

Hawkesdale P12 College (community story)

The Shire values the young people and the work that they do. The young people receive a certificate of appreciation and the local media cover the work of the young people. It is important that they get the recognition, not the council workers. When a project finishes, there is a presentation night and the Mayor or CEO makes a presentation to the young people.

Strathfieldsaye Primary School (staff story)

Even things like presenting awards. "We have environmental awards each year at our Grade 6 graduation from the SDCE [Strathfieldsaye & Districts Community Enterprise] Sustainable Strathfieldsaye group."

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

Michelle advises thanking volunteers and donators repeatedly – letters, banners, when speaking about items no matter how long ago donated.

Tooradin Primary School (staff story)

Those who are involved are acknowledged for their help in the School Newsletter and given Awards at assemblies. Valuing all contributions equally, no matter how small or large was highlighted as an important factor in fostering ongoing partnerships.

6.3.6 Partnership maintenance

Who schools partner with varies over time. Some projects and partnerships cease as their goals are achieved. Some cease because Sustainability Coordinators do not have the time to spend in partnership maintenance. Some simply cease as priorities change.

St Monica's College (combined story)

An example of an old working relationship is Aurora Estate, which is a housing estate near the school who have provided funding to St Monica's, and the students were involved in a water demonstration at an open day at the estate. Time and priorities have inhibited Paul from following up this partnership. What is clear is that St Monica's sustainability partnerships must necessarily be fluid and flexible depending on current circumstances. Last year the Mill Park relationship was thriving and the St Peter's relationship was just being initiated. The current focus is on the relationship with St Peter's, which is thriving. In the future, partnerships may evolve in other directions.

6.4 Project management

Participants have found that to maintain enthusiasm and commitment to SCLPfS it helps to use project management skills. These include the creation of a collaborative vision and project plan to evaluate progress and celebrate achievements regularly throughout the implementation phase and at the end of projects.

6.4.1 Collaborative vision

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)

Lindy also talked about the key ingredients of a successful school– community partnership. The most important thing is to have a leader who works collaboratively with others to create a vision and a direction for the school and then find people who want to help achieve that vision. It is also about valuing and combining different people's expertise and working together for a common goal. Communication is important and so too is the celebration of successes.

6.4.2 Consultation

Find out what everyone wants and build it into the projects:

Altona North and Altona Meadows Children's Centres (combined story)

It was important that the small changes for sustainability were not forced in a top down approach, but very much arose from the passion and commitment of the coordinator and staff. Each centre team developed their environmental goals and identified what was

important for them to change in their practices. It happened because staff were not dictated to, but were consulted and involved in decision making throughout, and this is on-going. In essence the culture change came from within facilitated by council. ...Lastly, change in small achievable steps determined by each centre was an important facilitating factor.



Figure 12: At Altona North Children’s Centre, reused barrels cut in half make excellent vegetable garden pots

Doveton North Primary School (staff story)

The partnership has also reached out to include parents. Cultivating Community ran a series of focus groups with parents, teachers and students to identify what the school community wanted from the edible garden project. Now teachers send home the recipes of meals made by students: “We’ve had parents who have come back and said my kid wouldn’t touch a broccoli and after we’ve used that recipe the kids were asking for broccoli.”

St Francis of the Fields Primary School (staff story)

Basically they’ve looked to see what the community needs or wants and they’ve put it into practice. Just for example, the latest sports facility, that’s the latest thing that they’ve done but that was ongoing for a long time. They thought about how it was going to be set up. They thought about it sustainably. Then she asked the kids what kind of things they would want because she said that’s where it starts, doesn’t it? Talking to the young people, and so that’s how they reach out to people too, isn’t it, through the schools?

Stick to your agreed plan:

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

Another challenge occurred when the school was shortlisted for the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program. A representative was sent to the school to review the area they intended to make into the garden. She wanted the school to modify their plan to create a larger vegetable garden space. This would have meant that some elements that the students had wanted would need to be sacrificed. Michelle said, “I could see that it was not going to work at all because we were talking about the whole sustainable principle approach and they were only talking about growing food”. The school decided to withdraw their application.

Honour the results of consultation:

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

Likewise they chose to honour the students’ choices. “The students wanted water; number one desirable item for a kid. Number one fear for parents and teachers. If we had not provided water we would have lost all credibility. That was their number one priority.”

6.4.3 Procedures

Montrose Primary School (combined story)

There is also agreement within the Montrose school community that establishing groups and processes or routines are central to sustaining Education for Sustainability. For example, the teachers agreed that establishing the student groups such as Green Genies and Inspirations was important to help students get involved in how to work towards sustainability in practical ways. Yet, just as important, was to sustain these groups and this required a need to create processes to ensure that they aren’t only “done once and then forgotten”. Ken examined the issue of developing systems in more depth, “The organisation [of] the groups that have been created, and the procedures; the way that the recycled paper is collected, compost is collected, the chickens are looked after – there’s all of these procedures in place. And they just keep on going; they’ve got a life of their own now, haven’t they? You don’t see them flagging”.

6.4.4 Involve all students to foster connection and respect

Balnarring Primary School (community story)

Mark shared: “One of the things about the wetland is that every student has had some input into that wetland, either planting trees or weeding or cleaning or whatever the case may be. So every student has a sense of ownership. So as the students grow up and become a member of the community, they have an intrinsic ownership of the wetland already because they’ve participated in it, they’ve actually invested themselves in it. So you find that there’s a lot of respect for it, there’s a lot of care for it. Occasionally you find a bit of vandalism but it’s the rarity not the norm. So it’s a respected asset in the community now as well as a brilliant learning environment.”

6.4.5 Evaluate and celebrate

Montrose Primary School (student story)

The students enjoyed the opportunity to reflect and talk about their school community's work towards sustainability because, as Jessica said, "It's been interesting. It's made you really think about all those things that you've done and made you feel even more good about them than when you did do them. You're going to remember them and feel happy about it".

Montrose Primary School (combined story)

Towards the end of their conversation the community members reflected on their past efforts and acknowledged that they are about to enter their second decade of sustainability initiatives within the Montrose school–community partnership. There was a sense that a review of the range of sustainability initiatives that had come and gone would be useful. As Lorraine explains, "A lot of things we do are not long lasting. We have an idea and we start and then we stop it". Lee (teacher) and Sandra (community member) agree and state that revitalisation is needed for program redevelopment, and to recruit new families and teaching staff into the variety of programs, to deal with the changing population dynamics as children grow and leave to take up their secondary schooling and new families enter the community with their young children.

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)

Tracey sustains these partnerships through establishing and maintaining personal contacts, maintaining a flow of communication, undertaking 'doing' activities, and establishing milestones. One also needs to build in time for reflection, monitoring and celebration. Monitoring means the setting of milestones and establishing benchmark data. The recorded improvements in the data give the organisation a sense of achievement. This then feeds through to policy within the school.

6.5 Reflective questions

Answering the following questions provides an opportunity for you to reflect on the material covered in this section of the Guidebook and its application to your current or desired SCLPfs.

Support for implementing SCLPfs

What level of management support do you have for SCLPfs?

What can you do to generate some quick win–wins that may lead to increased support from your Principal and school management?

How can you use this Guidebook to show the outcomes that can be achieved to your school staff? For example, make a poster of outcomes that is displayed in the staffroom, inform the staff about the Guidebook and its findings at a staff meeting, put a copy of the Guidebook in the library or electronically on the intranet. (This may generate more support and staff wanting to be involved in SCLPfS.)

How can you incorporate succession planning of sustainability coordinators into your SCLPfS?

Partnership recruitment and management

How do you attract partners for your SCLPfs?

What partnership management practices do you use?

Have you conducted consultation to identify what participants want? Were you surprised by the results? How did this affect the design of your project?

What methods do you use to appreciate and recognise your project partners?

What methods do you use to evaluate your partnership and project success?

How do you incorporate celebration throughout your projects?

7 FUNDING AND RESOURCING

In the case studies a number of creative ways to raise money for School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (SCLPfS) were identified. These included obtaining grants, government funding, funds from school budget, fundraising initiatives, obtaining sponsorship, getting donations, utilising savings from reduced energy and water usage, and earnings from selling garden produce and other items. Partners may also fund initiatives.

7.1 Grants

7.1.1 Grant writing skills a must!

Balnarring Primary School (staff story)

The staff members expressed gratitude for the support provided by the Shire, the Regional Waste Management Group, Sustainability Victoria and all the agencies that have allocated Awards to them. They were disappointed that the Department of Education did not provide financial support for sustainability activities. This lack of support meant staff had to spend considerable time and effort in fundraising from other sources. Balnarring Primary is obviously very good at this with Heather reporting that they have received “... over a quarter of a million dollars’ worth of grants since we started back in 1993”.

Tooradin Primary School (community story)

The group expressed praise for the school staff. Peter commented that “School Council has noticed how the staff have learnt how to prepare winning grants, how hard it was at first and how much easier it is for them now with their improved skills”. Grant writing is seen as “an integral part of their job now, to get any money to do anything you have to be able to apply for a grant”.

Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

Hannah added, “We were successful initially in getting some grants which got us started. It would have been hard to do a lot of what we did without those seeding grants, setting up tools and equipment and getting overalls for kids so you have to have someone writing grant applications and documenting what you are doing as well”.

7.1.2 If you’re initially unsuccessful, try again

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)

The school applied for a Stephanie Alexander grant during stage 1 but were unsuccessful. The school continued to build up vegetable garden beds and successfully reapplied for the grant three years ago. By this time the garden was well established and the children were becoming very knowledgeable about gardening.



Figure 13: The outdoor spaces and gardens at Port Fairy Consolidated School are used for hands-on, experiential learning

7.1.3 Multiple grants – taking time to gain large rewards

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)

The first challenge was the refurbishment of the school to incorporate renewable energy. The Department promised \$40,000 towards the cost if Lindy could find another partner. At the same time Lindy briefed the architects to design the building using sustainable architecture and energy systems. Lindy was able to secure the \$40,000 because she was successful in applying to local business, Pacific Hydro, for a \$10,000 community grant. Lindy was not satisfied with the \$50,000 secured and teamed up with the Moyne Shire Sustainability Officer, who helped the school apply for a Federal Government Abatement grant. The Sustainability Officer's contribution from Moyne Shire was in kind and proved invaluable in developing a successful application. This secured another \$55,000 and with a school contribution of \$10,000 the total funding for the Renewable Energy Demonstration Project was \$120,000. This project contributed 20 x 155w solar photovoltaic panels, Windy and Sunny Boy Inverters. About 15% of the school's energy is renewable. The grant also enabled the school to get the software and hardware (including a big screen in the library). The software will bring the information converted in through a website into a means of presentation of information that the children could use for analysis and reflection and also comparison with other businesses and schools globally. PFCS sought further grants to a value of \$65,000 through the Resource Smart Victorian Solar in School program and the National Solar Schools program. As a result a further 36 photovoltaic panels and an updated inverter were installed. Through such infrastructure the students are now able to calculate how many black balloons they have used on any particular day or how much wind energy the school uses compared to other locations, locally and globally. The renewable energy project was the beginning of defining the school's vision to be a sustainable school in terms of energy, water, biodiversity and waste. Lindy has shown great leadership, tenacity and vision. She began as Principal in 2006 with a promise of a \$40,000 grant from the DEECD if she could come up with other funds and now the school has a \$2,000,000 grant to build an environmental centre – inspirational. Currently the school is developing a building to house 'Our Sustainable World', which will incorporate our community kitchen, 'enviro' learning studio and our Cafe.

7.1.4 Short-term funding arrangements

Some funding sources stop. For example the Neighbourhood Renewal Initiative that has provided funds for Doveton North Primary's activities with Myuna Farm ended in 2011. Likewise, the SAKGP schools are provided with funding for two years then they are expected to continue operating the program without further funding support. This puts added pressures on the schools. Similar pressures occur in partner agencies that assist schools.

Hawkesdale P12 College (staff story)

Don has also lead energy assessments for the school. Again Don was guided initially by an outside organisation – Sustainable Energy Authority Victoria (SEAV). They were very helpful in providing information on assessing energy use and suggestions for cost effective improvements. They also provided lots of practical information and tools, for example a computer program that enabled the assessment of consumption figures per student, per square metre. This was very useful for reporting to the School Council. The funding for the project officer ran out and as is often the case short-term funding can be a problem over a 10-year period. ... Projects come and go, but the partnerships are ongoing and good relationships develop over time.

7.2 Government funding

In a number of our case studies it was initial financial support from government (local, state or federal) that enabled the 'champion teacher' to implement their activities for sustainability.

Balnarring Primary School (combined story)

The school's sustainability focus broadened in 2005 when the Mornington Peninsula Shire and the Sustainability Fund provided money for Balnarring Primary to undertake the Sustainable Schools Initiative with CERES and Planet Savers. They made amazing achievements including water savings of 95%, which resulted in them winning the Resource Smart, Water School of the Year for 2008 and the overall Resource Smart School of the Year in 2009.

Doveton North Primary School (community story)

The partnership between the school and the farm is part of a wider network of support that includes government. Early funding for the gardens was provided by the City of Casey. More recently, the partnership has received support through the Victorian Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Project. The local Neighbourhood Renewal team and its associated community development workers have played a key role in strengthening the community and providing funds for initiatives such as the gardens. The financial and in-kind support from locally based business such as Safeway and Bunnings has also been important. Work has also been contributed by participants in a Work for the Dole program. What is clear is that these important external resources would not have been available without the active fundraising and networking of the partnership members.

Doveton North Primary School (combined story)

In particular, Sustainability Victoria and the Victorian Government's Neighbourhood Renewal initiative and its local officers have provided pivotal support for the partnership. Support was also provided by Education Foundation, now a division of The Foundation for Young Australians, through its 'are you Making a Difference?' (ruMAD?) Program.

7.2.1 Local government support for a range of activities

Mill Park Secondary College (student story)

The local council has a large part to play also, as Steph points out, "we work to make our community more sustainable by...working with the [Whittlesea] council". Whittlesea council made a financial contribution to help the students put on their own conference, and at the time of the interviews, some of the students were preparing a submission to the full council asking for support for various activities and projects such as a wetland and outdoor classroom area amongst other things.

Mill Park Secondary College (community story)

One example is the River Detectives program facilitated by Peter, which involves various activities including water testing, macro invertebrate identification and other hands-on activities. One of the great things about this program is that, through Council funding, it can be offered as a free program, which is a major drawcard for student participation.

7.3 School budget

While many of our case studies did not start out with any funding from school budgets, they found that this was made available once the value of their activities was recognised across the school and they requested a sustainability budget.

Mill Park Secondary College (community story)

Access to sustainability budgets is also recognised as important; for example, Lorna has her own budget and although it was not automatically allocated to her, she is lucky to have a high level of support and approval from her campus Principal, and as soon as she asked for it, she was provided funds to be used at her discretion.

Montrose Primary School (staff and community story)

Lorraine also reminded everyone that eventually the committee asked the Principal for a budget to support integration of the sustainability within the curriculum. This eventuated and has assisted in sustaining the work of the committee.

The Patch Primary School (combined story)

The eco-centre cost \$40,000 to build and was achieved through fundraising initiatives, through materials donated by local businesses and through staff and community members

donating their time and skills to build it. It was also supported out of global budget funds as the previous Principal chose to invest in the eco-centre knowing that unlike computers it would not need to be upgraded every few years. He could see that having the eco-centre and a full-time specialist environmental education teacher, Michelle, could be a drawcard for enrolments and further develop the environmental ethos of the school.

7.4 Fundraising

There is a range of methods used to raise funds – from raffles to dinner events.

Port Fairy Consolidated School (combined story)

Another recent development has been to work with a group involved in raising money to use a large disused catholic church as a community centre. The group (St Brigid's Church Group) have purchased the church from the catholic diocese but must now service a loan as well as have enough finances for repairs and maintenance. A dinner has been planned in the church as a large event to promote and make the wider community aware of its existence as well as the school's kitchen garden program. This event will be a fundraiser for both parties and the school's SAKG program will cater for the event.

7.5 Sponsorship

A wide variety of businesses can provide sponsorship of your school–community sustainability activities.

Tooradin Primary School (combined story)

Students have helped design and build the Human Powered Vehicles (HPVs) with the aid of teachers and parents, such as Kelly's Dad. The old HPVs were made from recycled paper and cardboard along with parts recycled from bicycles and other equipment, but recently the school has purchased two new frames and have been busy doing the final construction work so that they are ready to race. Many local businesses sponsor the project or provide parts. Examples include P&A Automotive, Gendore, Foodworks, T&J Butchers, Bendigo Bank, City of Casey, M.J. Cabinets, Balla Balla Lions Club, Tooradin Sports Club, and P&P Products.

7.6 Donations from business and service groups

There are a wide range of businesses and service groups that you can contact to request support for your SCLPFS. In a number of our case studies local nurseries and hardware stores provided free products and on occasion even helped to install or plant them. Teachers advise us that business personnel seem to respond more if the students are the ones that make the requests.

7.6.1 A variety of businesses donate:

St Francis of the Fields Primary School (staff story)

I also think that links probably could be a bit stronger with local shops, I reckon. One good

example is we had a fruit and veggie shop just over the road and they gave us unlimited supply of fresh food for our pigs and our animals. We tried to push for a bit of support through the newsletter and they didn't get the support that they needed. As a result they've closed. That was a really nice little local business that had been there for a long time.

St Francis of the Fields Primary School (student story)

The students also mentioned how a local insurance company celebrated their 70th anniversary by donating 70 seedlings that were planted during their big tree planting day.

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

Local businesses also help. A local quarry gave the school \$4000 worth of stone for free, charging them only the cost of cartage. Rotary donated \$500 worth of overalls. A hardware store donated some garden tools while a local mechanic donated unneeded pavers.

7.6.2 Get the students to make the requests:

Montrose Primary School (staff story)

"All the kids wrote letters to Bunnings. I think Bunnings, Mitre 10 and whoever got millions of letters from the kids, so they came with water tanks. There were a few free water tanks, and a Dad installed them all."

Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

Alison explained that the students will be given responsibility to source the materials for projects such as building the garden. They ask their parents and relatives to donate materials, and may ring up local businesses. She said that in the end the students were competing with each other "You know, my auntie's got a nursery. So's my uncle. We can get it cheaper..." Jean talked about a particular female student who "When she rang up local businesses and got pretty much donated, when I know the price of the marine ply and how much she got it for, yeah businesses are really supportive when a student rings up. I'm always saying, you have to do it, you have to write the letter, you have to make the phone call, even if it would be much easier if I did it because it would be done so quickly, but that's a better way of doing it".

Western Port Secondary College (student story)

Tarsha has also found that her confidence has grown from speaking about the school's sustainability initiatives at the Tool Box for Sustainability Workshop at the Museum and her involvement in activities such as contacting local businesses to gain support for their projects. She said, "Local business often – when my class did the indigenous garden I called up every local nursery I could think of and got quotes from them and then Bunnings offered to come down and do it for free. So they came down and gave us plants and a couple of them came down and showed us how to plant them properly and keep them alive. That was really good too".

7.7 Donations from families and community members

It was quite common in the case studies to find that many of the brilliant activities that had been completed would not have occurred except for the generous donations of materials, time and skills from families and community members. The schools did not have budgets to purchase all the equipment or labour needed.

7.7.1 You can achieve projects with limited funds:

Montrose Primary School (combined story)

The Shire of Yarra Ranges' environment officers facilitate opportunities for networking with other school communities. The Montrose teachers reveal that they learned from and with other school communities as a result of these networking opportunities. An example was the call out to the school's families and friends about the idea to create a wetland or, as it is affectionately known, the Frog Bog. A father came with an excavator and drew on his landscaping experience and had it organised in a weekend. This strategy was instigated by an idea the Montrose teachers saw at a network meeting at nearby Birmingham PS. They learned about how little money Birmingham needed to create a creek habitat by asking for help from the community – or as Birmingham advised, “Just ask everybody!” This strategy has been successful and has diversified by getting students involved in writing letters for support or funding, which often leads to developing more lasting partnerships, particularly with local businesses.

7.7.2 Advertise for what you need in the newsletter:

Port Fairy Consolidated School (student story)

The parents of one of the students provided fish and crayfish that had been caught that day. The food came from families and local businesses.

The Patch Primary School (staff transcript)

I was on duty up in the oval and I'd put an ad in the newsletter asking if anyone has access to rock or knows where we might be able to get some. I rang the shire, they used to have drop-off spots where rock might have been piled and accumulated; nothing. Then I was on duty one day and a parent of a child in Grade 2 came up and said are you still interested in some rock. I said yes, definitely. She said well my husband manages a quarry in Tynong and he seems to think we could have some.

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

Much of the labour and materials were provided freely by parents, staff, partners and local businesses. Michelle would advertise in the school newsletter that they were looking for a certain product or people with a certain skill to help and people responded. Parents and teachers helped build the frame and install the cladding of the eco-centre; a parent gave up three days to build an outdoor stage for the school; another parent spent 18 months constructing the pizza oven in his spare time; while Mark, a garden team member, did a lot of landscaping and is now building an outdoor classroom and rock wall. Families donated old windows, tiles, paint, outdoor tables and chairs, classroom furniture, aquariums, plants and recently igloo hoops and couplings for a propagation facility. ... Michelle never said

“no” to any donation as she felt if she did the donations would dry up. To thank those that donated there is a banner listing all donors, thankyou letters were sent and details were included in the school newsletter.

Tooradin Primary School (staff story)

Rachel added that there is so much parental support that the [SAKG] program is being operated on approximately 40-50 cents per student a week. This is “because we let families know what the students are cooking from week to week in the newsletter. Many parents then donate items so that the school doesn’t need to purchase them. By doing this they feel that they are helping to contribute in some way”. Produce also comes from a partnership with the Koo Wee Rup Community Garden, in the hospital grounds. Being a community garden they are more than willing for the school to be involved in swapping vegetables, so that if either has a glut in one thing they can swap them.

7.7.3 Set up a gift registry or sponsorship program:

Doveton North Primary School (staff story)

Despite the support from Cultivating Community, funding for the Rainbow Garden and the Myuna Farm partnership remained a problem. The school had held fundraising events where it asked parents to sponsor things needed for the garden. “You could sponsor a spade or you could sponsor an orange tree or you could sponsor a little hand trowel.”

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)

The parent community have supplied a lot of the equipment for the kitchen. The school set up a gift registry to get the equipment and they contributed a lot.

7.7.4 Canvass widely for volunteers:

St Jude’s Primary School (combined story)

People such as Alan, a retired parishioner who is paid to do maintenance on the school paths and garden surrounds of the school, is very dedicated and always willing to do voluntary hours to help the children.

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

Ex-students regularly come back to help out voluntarily or as work experience or as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Tooradin Primary School (staff story)

When they wanted to create the dry creek bed they had local businesses, such as Bunnings, Flemings Nurseries and Mansfield Propagation Nursery, donate trees. They also had a wide range of partners assist with planting the trees and landscaping the area. This included parents and grandparents, staff from Bunnings, a team of Conservation Volunteers Australia and a Correctional Services team.

7.8 Savings

One way to raise funds is to arrange for any savings made on electricity and water bills to be invested into a sustainability fund, rather than returned back to the school's global budget.

Western Port Secondary College (community story)

He adds that in the longer term, “we’re hoping that out of the energy savings Hannah’s achieved, she can start locking some of the financial savings away, so that eventually with the saved money the school could cover its roofs with solar panels (as prices come down) and eventually become a totally electricity neutral site. This should be possible over the next few years if solar panel prices continue to drop as they have been”.

7.9 Earnings

In the case studies, as a part of their sustainability projects, the students and staff have found ways to earn money, for example by selling vegetables, chickens, prepared food, recipe books and seedlings.

Port Fairy Consolidated School (staff story)



Figure 14: A student proudly displays produce harvested from the Port Fairy kitchen garden

With the next community market, the children will continue to inspire the community and get the community involved more. It is a wider community connection; it provides a few hundred dollars that can go back into the kitchen. The priority is for the children to have that experience. They are the best people to tell the community about their work. The last one was so successful the school will ensure that they are involved in at least two markets per term.

Strathfieldsaye Primary School (staff story)

A significant change that has occurred with these students is that they are able to experience the whole growing process and use and/or sell the produce from the garden at school and at home. Students sell the produce from their veggie garden and chooks and the funds are re-invested into the garden and chook facilities.

Strathfieldsaye Primary School (staff story)

Recently the school has begun to propagate a significant number of indigenous plant species, which we will use directly in local re-vegetation activities. If the propagation is successful enough, we will investigate how we can work with the local Landcare group as a propagation facility for them so we can sell the plant seedlings back to them.

Tooradin Primary School (combined story)

Funds were also raised by selling to the community a recipe book that students created.

7.10 Prize money

A further possible source of income is that from prize money won for sustainability initiatives. This can be invested into further sustainability projects.

Western Port Secondary College (student story)

The Resource Smart Schools prize money has been used to create a small grant program for funding further sustainability initiatives within the school. The Environmental Team is responsible for administering the grant program. Mitch explains, “Yeah because we won the Resource Smart School Award, we got a grant for \$4000. Now Miss Lewis has set up this application, you need a bill in the application, the prices or the price you think it’ll cost, the teacher that recommended it, the method that you’ll use etc. Then our environmental meeting will go over those and then ask for people to come over and do an interview with us. Then we’ll either accept it, we’ll probably accept it. But it has to have something to do with environmentally sustainable or socially sustainable”. Melinda gave an example of the projects being funded: “The footy bins, painting all the bins in footy colours to encourage people to put their rubbish in the bin.”

7.11 Partner-funded initiatives

Partner-funded initiatives for SCLPfS appear to be quite rare at this stage, but have been known to occur.

Strathfieldsaye Primary School and St Francis of the Fields Primary School (community story)

Ben added that from an impartial perspective, “I think because the Strath Community Enterprise was the first in the country to adopt their model, they’ve been the first to take these sorts of steps – in terms of engagement of partners with a bit of clout, being able to get to schools who were already going gangbusters by themselves, to get them on-board”. ... Keith outlined the components of the enterprise model as being essentially about the relationship with the Bendigo Bank and Bendigo Community Telco, which redeems a revenue stream. Having a community group that can generate a revenue stream really gives a great deal of strength to that community group and if they have the vision to go with it, it can be really powerful. “I know of many committees and community organisations that have been voluntary and spend hours out running raffles and seeking donations to achieve

a target figure for something to be developed within their community, and once it's done they just fall over exhausted. But they achieve their target. The beauty of the Community Enterprise model is that it has a regular reliable income stream coming in to it. It's a continuous model and it relies on partnership with local businesses. It's established its own momentum and at the moment we're generating \$130,000 a year and that's just on the trailing dividend model of income coming in – that's a hell of a lot of chook raffles – from people who have pledged their custom from Bendigo Bank. But there's the potential to expand beyond that and develop partnerships with other businesses as well."

7.12 Reflective questions

Answering the following questions provides an opportunity for you to reflect on the material covered in this section of the Guidebook and its application to your current or desired SCLPfS.

How have you raised funds for SCLPfS to date?

Do you see value in partnerships with local businesses? If so, what type of partnerships can you envision?

How can you create opportunities for local business to sponsor your activities? Where can their logos be displayed?

What potential partnership activities would lead to win–win outcomes with local businesses?

What support does your local government offer to schools and their communities? (They may be able to provide you with advice about potential partners, projects and funding opportunities. They may also be able to provide financial support for various activities.)

How can you adapt the funding and resourcing methods discussed in this section of the Guidebook to your situation?

8 FACTORS THAT MAKE IT EASY OR HARD

There were many factors identified by participants that made doing School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (SCLPfs) easier or harder. These can be divided into school factors, location factors and personnel factors.

8.1 School factors

8.1.1 Principal and management support for SCLPfs

The support of the Principal and school management was mentioned as being crucial to success in SCLPfs by a number of participants at various case study sites. Principal support varied, from providing permission, time and funding for projects, to actively promoting sustainability to other staff and encouraging their involvement.

At Tooradin Primary the Sustainability Coordinator is the Principal Marjorie Scarce, while at Western Port Secondary College it is the Vice Principal, Hannah Lewis. This commitment to sustainability at the Principal level ensures that SCLPfs occur and continue in their schools.

Balnarring Primary School (combined story)

Rhonda, the Principal, provides a leadership focus on sustainability, regularly encouraging teachers to use the wetlands and to address energy, water and waste issues in their classrooms.

Montrose Primary School (staff and community story)

Katrina, Amber and Lorraine also identified the Principal as a key player in leading the partnership. They explained that since they've formally engaged with environmental and sustainability issues and related projects that they've had two supportive Principals. The teachers saw that the Principal had important communicative and advocacy roles for sustainability with parents and students. Katrina also identified that he "gave us a lot of freedom" to initiate projects such as "frog bog, chicken coop, how we got everything".

Tooradin Primary School (community story)

Community members acknowledge "it really has to come from all sides, doesn't it, because if you have teachers that are pushing it but parents that don't want to have a bar of it, it wouldn't work. If you had parents that were pushing for it but teachers that can't be bothered, it wouldn't work, and if you didn't have management that would support it and apply for those grants, it wouldn't work, but because our school has all three aspects, all really keen and happy to help and working together, I think that's possibly why it's working." ...Community members acknowledged how much effort Marj has put in on top of her normal duties as Principal and how this has led to sustainability being embedded into the school culture.

8.1.2 School sustainability ethos

A commitment to sustainability within your school at all levels (management, staff, administration, school board and community) makes it much easier to implement SCLPfs. It means there is more likely to be support for projects, for continuous improvement, and for inclusion of sustainability on school meeting agendas and as a key criterion for staff recruitment. When such support exists for sustainability projects, they are likely to continue even if key personnel leave.

Support for projects:

Doveton North Primary School (community story)

While some teachers are very involved and excited about the program, others are reluctant to release their students from class to work in the garden: “They’re not quite sure why they’re going out into the garden. They don’t see it necessarily something that belongs with the classroom.”

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

In the early days when School Council or parents questioned the value of the students spending so much time outdoors, Michelle had to keep explaining the learning outcomes and links to the curriculum. She said, “It now seems to be telling itself”.

Commitment to continuous improvement:

Tooradin Primary School (staff story)

What I found was an extraordinary commitment to continuous improvement and a heightened focus on getting change for sustainability in the community. Kristie gave an example of [the school’s] continuous improvement: “The urinals already were flushed with tank water but by installing waterless we save more...it’s reducing that reliance on the tank. Because when they run out, we’re back to mains water and so [by using waterless urinals] you’re keeping [the tanks] fuller for longer, so we can flush the other toilets with it. So we ask: how can we get more sustainable, what can we do now? Even when we are fully self-sustainable, in the future, what can we do next? How can we spread the sustainable message even further?”

Recruitment of sustainability focused staff:

Balnarring Primary School (staff story)

The sustainability culture at the school is further strengthened by deliberate recruitment of new staff with a sustainability focus. Heather explained that the recent advertisements for classroom teacher vacancies included a requirement that applicants “... must have a commitment to sustainability in the classroom and across the whole community”.

Have sustainability on the agenda of regular meetings:

Altona North and Altona Meadows Children’s Centres (combined story)

Since the audits, the centre coordinators and staff have continued to exchange ideas with the Children’s Services Coordinator and environment team, to the extent that sustainability has become part of regular meetings with council and in the centres.

Continuation after key people leave:

The Patch Primary School (staff story)

A further threat occurred when the Principal retired before major construction [of the eco-centre] commenced, but thankfully Michelle was chosen as the staff representative and placed on the selection committee and was therefore able to ensure that sustainability was used as a criterion for assessing applicants. The new Principal is supportive and has modified Michelle’s timetable to enable her to undertake garden responsibilities in addition to her teaching.

8.1.3 Impact of success – requests and options

As schools become known for being involved in sustainability partnerships they find that others want to learn from them or approach them to undertake new projects. This is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it leads to less work for the Sustainability Coordinator in developing new ideas and projects, but on the other hand it can lead to having too many options and projects on the go. Sometimes it is important to be able to say no and to focus on your main goals.

Too many requests for support:

Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

The Concrete Couches project has been so successful that the school has had too many requests from primary schools wanting to be involved. Jean, who has been managing the project, is now focusing on showing other teachers how to do it. She has spoken at several conferences and is considering producing a professional development activity for others to undertake.

Doing too much:

Hawkesdale P12 College (combined story)

Don points out that the school had used “an almost inexhaustible variety of different strategies” in the management of the consumption of materials and energy – particularly waste. Hawkesdale P12 at one stage also assisted the local Post Office and Kindergarten to manage their waste. After a time the school found that the price of processing the waste became prohibitive due to the price of fuel. The school also found that while teachers and

students learnt a lot about the environment and waste management, everyone was spending far too much time feeding mulchers and processing waste, which was getting in the way of learning. Also there were increasing concerns about OH&S (Occupational Health & Safety) issues. Now the school's tractor and mulcher sit in the shed and the school has scaled back these activities. The lesson learnt from this was that the main reason to work in the environmental field is for educational purposes.

Strathfieldsaye Primary School (staff story)

Strath Primary has been very busy and engaged in a wide range of school and broader community sustainability initiatives. It now aims to not add any more but to focus even more on building depth of knowledge and skills in education for sustainability in the curriculum, particularly in maths and literacy. The key is definitely to build it into the curriculum.

Approached by partners:

Tooradin Primary School (staff story)

As a result of their ongoing partnerships and achievements, Tooradin Primary has become known as a school willing to do new things. They no longer have to seek out partnerships; partners are coming to them asking if they'd like to be involved in activities. Healesville Sanctuary has asked the school students to grow native plants (Bidgee Widgee) from seeds that they supply. Bidgee Widgee is being grown "because of the endangered Orange-Bellied Parrot. These birds migrate from Tasmania to the Australian mainland to feed on the variety of coastal saltmarsh plants, which grow naturally along the coast". The students will plant and grow seagrasses / mangroves in the Western Port Bay in partnership with Western Port Seagrass Partnership, South Australian Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA), Dolphin Research Institute – i sea, i care and the City of Casey.

8.1.4 School size and mergers

Participants mentioned that it was harder to implement SCLPfS in larger schools due to the logistics of working with so many staff and students. Change in schools, whether due to rapid growth or mergers between schools, was also mentioned as a challenge to SCLPfS.

Challenge of large schools:

Mill Park Secondary College (combined story)

Logistically, Mill Park Secondary College is a very large school, so change is harder to implement and it is harder to get the whole school community on board.

St Francis of the Fields Primary School (staff story)

St Francis of the Fields Primary School "is now 350 per cent the size of the school it was six/seven years ago so that's a big challenge for me and for the rest of the staff in terms of maintaining that status of the AuSSI Vic leader school... [Schools] weren't advanced back then...but now what used to be us leading the way, other schools are overtaking us in a lot

of instances by just doing what every other school is doing these days.”

Challenge of school mergers:

Doveton North Primary School (staff story)

The greatest risk to the sustainability of the garden as an endeavour is the incipient closing down of the current school site. Doveton North Primary School is one of a number of local schools about to merge and move to a redeveloped location with better resources. It will be able to relocate the trees that it has planted, but not the garden. Teachers hope that the new site will have a space for another community and school garden, “The ideas that we’re developing here are transferable”.

Doveton North Primary School (combined story)

The partners hope that the new site will have a space for another community and school garden, but recognise that such initiatives depend on the school culture and that the partnership may not succeed in translating across to the new school. They are working hard to shore up and strengthen structures and relationships within the partnership so that it can continue into the future.

Benefit of small schools:

Tooradin Primary School (community story)

Different sustainability activities occur throughout the different year levels at Tooradin Primary. The parents believe that this helps excite the students about sustainability. “The school is small enough that students see what is done at each year level; each group and each area has responsibilities and they look forward to the next ones, and they know about the next ones because they see them happening.”

8.2 Location factors

8.2.1 Active school cluster

Active school clusters enabling networking and joint activities to be undertaken was mentioned as a factor in facilitating the implementation of SCLPfs.

Doveton North Primary School (combined story)

As a member of a local school cluster, the school is currently involved in the creation of a sustainable curriculum, which will engage all teachers and students across the cluster schools, and which is informed by an Environmental Sustainability group that includes community members. As one teacher explains, “the ideas that we’re developing here are transferable”. ...The sustainable curriculum is seen as another important way of ensuring the longevity of the partnership’s impact, because it spreads the message across a larger number of schools, which can carry its learning and relationships forward.

8.2.2 Local government involvement

Several local governments are establishing Teachers Environment Networks (TENs). The Council Officers organise opportunities for the 'champion teachers' and Sustainability Coordinators at the schools in the local government area to meet, share ideas, learn new information and discuss projects.

Some local councils are even developing educational programs for the schools. This helps make it easier for the Teachers and Coordinators to conduct a variety of SCLPfS activities. There are even examples of local governments organising regional student activities that the schools can then choose to participate in.

Sustainability education programs:

Montrose Primary School (community story)

The school has participated in the Shire of Yarra Ranges 'Learning for sustainability' program, which has provided them with a framework and process to incorporate sustainability into the school ground and curriculum. Anthony reports that Montrose is one of their leading schools and has been involved from the very early days of the Shire program. The Shire also organises network meetings between schools so that they can meet and learn from each other, which is greatly appreciated by the schools. The parents and community groups acknowledge that the Shire plays a significant role in helping the school achieve and sustain the agenda of learning, living and working towards a sustainable future. The Shire is also the key to matching and connecting different people within the community for sustainability, as it provides schools with contacts of potential partners in the community.

The Yarra Ranges Council's Learning for Sustainability (LfS) program is offered free to all schools within the Shire. The program assists and supports schools to incorporate sustainable initiatives both within the school grounds and the broader community. The LfS program aims to help schools gain a stronger understanding of their ecological footprint, how they use resources, but most of all how students, staff and members of the broader school community can make a difference working towards a more sustainable future. An important element of the program is the LfS Teachers Network Meetings. In the Yarra Ranges LfS network, two meetings are held each term (one for primary teachers and one for secondary teachers) and are hosted by schools in the program. Both the Patch Primary and Montrose Primary schools participate in the Yarra Ranges Council's LfS program.

Teacher environment networks:

Mill Park Secondary College (community story)

One feature of the networking is an approach that takes advantage of the local geography. For example, partnerships are formed and connections are forged through interaction with local catchment areas such as Darebin creek and Merri creek, which often serves to bring

various schools and other bodies together in collaboration. Local Council is also a key player in the networks and in supporting the activities not only directly through funding for the activities, but also more indirectly through funding for organisations such as the Darebin Creek Management Committee who offer free educational activities such as the River Detectives program. Peter observes that the Councils are “always really supportive”. The Teacher Environment Network (TEN) meetings were also identified as an important source of support and information. The meetings are run by various Councils including the City of Whittlesea, and bring together teachers from the region with an interest or a professional capacity related to environmental education and sustainability. It was identified as a significant opportunity for networking, sharing ideas and collaborating, as well as an opportunity to gain valuable professional development from various guest speakers and workshops.

Student environment networks:

Montrose Primary School (community story)

The school also participated in a Young Environmental Protectors Day that the Shire arranged. Students from five schools visited leading environmental schools including Montrose to see what could be done.

Regional projects:

Hawkesdale P12 College (combined story)

In addition, the Our PlaYce Youth Leadership Program, a joint enterprise by Moyne Shire Council and Warrnambool City Council, enabled young people from Hawkesdale P12 and five other regional municipalities to work on selected projects relevant to their respective area. The program is facilitated by Geraldine. The young people from Hawkesdale developed the idea of working with HADDAC on creating a walking track, including revegetation and the development of interpretative signs about local plant life and animal species at The Common. Geraldine prides herself on working with young people at a level that makes sense to them; for example, not making promises that you cannot deliver on and ensuring that the programs and projects must be driven by the young people. Geraldine sees her role as facilitator and sometimes playing “devil’s advocate”. Open communication is very important. To Geraldine this means the way the project is run. It must be owned by young people – this includes both achievements and disappointments. While a young leader is appointed, all young people involved in the project must take responsibility for the implementation. This means attending HADDAC meetings, reporting on progress to Geraldine. It is important that the young people are the face of the project and the ones that will be reported in the local media. The Youth Development Officer’s role is to ensure that the young people have the support required so that the project will succeed. However, not all projects will happen and while this is disappointing for young people, it is the reality of life and the learning throughout is very valuable.

Hawkesdale P12 College (community story)

The things that have sustained the project include the role of the Shire and in particular the Shire facilitator. The Youth Development Officer made a commitment to the project and was determined to see it through.

Hawkesdale P12 College (student story)

The students talked enthusiastically about this project – especially the role of Geraldine. As one student said, “she’s like the glue that sticks us all together”. The students started working on this when they were in Year 9 and are still working on this in Year 12, so it has been a long journey.

8.2.3 Regional student sustainability networks

Regional student sustainability networks are being developed by local governments and by schools. In the Mill Park Secondary College case study, the network is organised by the ‘champion Teacher’ and the students by holding regional ‘kids teaching kids’ conferences. In some case studies the creation of a student sustainability network is their next desired step.

Strathfieldsaye Primary School (staff story)

The next step for Strathfieldsaye Primary School is to develop the sense of student ownership even further by establishing a more formally structured student Sustainable Strathfieldsaye committee to work alongside and feed into the Sustainable Strathfieldsaye Committee (SSC).

St Monica’s College (community story)

The teacher would like the students to be able to meet like the teachers do in the TEN meetings. So that the students can set their own agendas and run them like a Student Representative Council (SRC) meeting. She believes there are a growing number of students who would like to be involved in an environment committee. She said it would be a great opportunity for students to develop leadership skills.

8.2.4 Acceptability of sustainability

The level of acceptability of sustainability in your local area affects people’s willingness to get involved. If your community is more interested in other issues it may be harder to implement SCLPfS. Overall, there appears to be a trend of greater acceptance of the need for action on sustainability issues as shown in the following quote.

Mill Park Secondary College (community story)

The most significant change the community members have witnessed is a cultural shift that has brought issues of sustainability and the environment into a more mainstream focus. As is quite important when engaging youth, these issues are moving away from a common perception of being something for ‘nerds or hippies’, and rather, are starting to be seen as ‘cool’. Not only did community members feel they are witnessing changing attitudes within students, but also their parents. They believe this is part of a more general societal shift toward engagement with these topics. Lorna also acknowledges the role of mainstream media and entertainment, noting, “it’s on the TV as well...they’re having a ‘green formal’ in Neighbours”. She adds, “It’s all going cool, and I think the cooler leaders they have, they look up to them and they go, well yes okay, well you’re not a nerd I can do that”.

8.2.5 Community connectedness

Some locations have longer-term residents who have formed community connections and partnerships. In other locations, there is a higher turnover of residents as families and individuals move from one rental property to another. With such a transient population it may be harder to form SCLPfS.

Doveton North Primary School (community story)

Because Doveton is a low-income area, many residents are transient, renting in the area before moving on. It is also a highly multicultural area. These factors make the task of community building difficult.

Mill Park Secondary College (community story)

Along with the student confidence and empowerment which emerges from these activities, Peter also points out one of the key benefits is educating the students as to what is actually present in the local environment. He notes that, “some of them just don’t even know that the Darebin Creek or Merri Creek or the Plenty River are even there. They certainly can’t name them, and they’re pretty significant wildlife corridors”. Hence, the restoration of knowledge and engagement with the local geography is a key outcome of their community-based activities.

Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

She said that it also gives students a sense of place, connectedness, a grounding in the area, something that they can call their own. “It’s just important, isn’t it, especially if you’ve got a transient like army population or a rental population which moves a lot, they’ve got something here that’s theirs.” Alison added that it teaches them to enjoy being “... in a natural or semi-natural environment ...some of them are becoming much more familiar with an urban environment. How to, you know, hang out in the shopping mall, that’s the first option”. So these activities help to provide an alternative to that.

8.2.6 Distances involved

Implementing SCLPfS is much easier if your community partners or project focus are within walking distance of the school. The further away they are, the harder it is logistically to implement projects.

Mill Park Secondary College (community story)

For instance, Peter notes that it often depends on a school’s location and local geography in terms of the kinds of activities they get involved in, “if some schools are within walking distance of say the creek, for example, or some sort of natural areas, it’s a bit easier for them to sort of access that to do things. Whereas, if you’re not, you’ve got to get a bus and that makes it into an excursion”. Location is therefore possibly an interesting variable in investigating school sustainability engagement and the ways in which teachers and students engage with the community.

St Monica's College (combined story)

It is important to note that the growing partnership between the two schools based on the wetland project has been enabled by practicalities, i.e. St Peter's is walking distance from St Monica's; primary schools are easier to work with than secondary schools as they have more flexibility around their timetable as they are not governed by a strict curriculum; and primary schools use inquiry learning, which means the wetlands and environmental sustainability issues are an ideal context for their learning.

8.3 Personnel factors

8.3.1 Willingness to learn new skills, take risks and delegate

If you have staff willing to learn new skills, takes risks and delegate, it is much easier to implement SCLPfs.

Willingness to learn new skills:

Montrose Primary School (community story)

Lorraine was reported as the driving force for many of these initiatives and this led the school to offer her some funding to do the gardening and coordinate activities. There is also now a budget for sustainability initiatives. The last two years Lorraine has completed a land management course to build her knowledge and skills further.

The Patch Primary School

Michelle undertook a landscape design class once a week for a year to learn about garden design principles and how to draw a landscape plan. (Staff story)

Rosie said that "Sophia, the art teacher, did a course on garden art in the last couple of years because she's been so inspired by it, and she does a lot of her teaching in the garden." (Community story)

Willingness to take risks:

Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

Jean explains that the projects have often "... come from little sparky ideas from the class. You really don't know what you're doing. Like the couches, we didn't know, I didn't know how to do that, I'd never done that before in my life. But out of the class, one kid had done concreting, one kid had done rendering, one kid had done reinforcements ... It was really good just learning beside each other". They were prepared to take the risk and try it. Jean commented that "we have a subset of skills, gardening, artistic, creative skills that we take for granted so we're comfortable in that zone whereas [many] teachers aren't."

Willingness to delegate and accept input from others:

St Monica's College (combined story)

From a personal perspective, interpersonal skills and openness to working in partnerships rather than trying to do everything on your own is fundamental to success. As Paul notes, you've got to be "open to people to come and have a look. They might not like what they see, or they might say you should be doing it this way. That's okay though". The wetlands project required people with expertise to be involved which has led to ongoing working partnerships with La Trobe University and the Darebin Creek Management Committee.

8.3.2 Staff confidence managing classes outdoors

It was suggested that some staff might lack confidence in managing classes outdoors. This is a key issue for professional development.

Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

Indeed they have found that initially other staff members were not so willing to conduct activities in the outdoor garden. Hannah explained: "There's a big fear factor ...we realised that staff are quite nervous about taking kids out of the classroom because you don't have those controls, like desks and chairs and a confined space. So we've relied on staff who are prepared to take a bit of a risk, and those who have done it have really embraced it." Hannah said, "[to assist the other staff to build confidence] early on we had a staff meeting out in the outdoor classroom where we rotated groups of staff between each of the projects, and three of the naughtiest boys in the school stopped, got up there and spoke to all the staff very articulately about what they were doing because they were totally confident about their project which was concreting the snake's head which formed the beginning of the pathway into our Outdoor Classroom". She added, "...as long as they've got structure and an activity and strong teacher, they're fine". Alison explained, "...you have to model it, you have to show them what's possible. This is a unit that I developed or Jean developed or something, and this is how it relates to your subject area, this is how you can teach this skill". ...Jean has also played a support role explaining how to manage such a project to teachers of other schools at conferences. She has explained how you often can't have all students working on the outdoor activity at once. There may not be enough shovels or you may only need a small number to be concreting or digging a garden at any one time. The rest of the students play football or uno, then the groups rotate so that all get to work on the activity.

8.3.3 Flexibility – See opportunities for learning and take them

It was suggested that flexibility was a key factor in implementing SCLPFS. It is important to be prepared to alter what you are doing to take advantage of unplanned learning opportunities that present themselves.

Altona North and Altona Meadows Children's Centres (combined story)

For example, at Altona North Children's Centre a water tank building project developed from the children's interests in water.

Altona North and Altona Meadows Children’s Centres (community story)

For example, at Altona Meadows Children’s Centre a child arrived at the centre on their parents’ bicycle so the staff took a photo to promote sustainable transport. The photo was placed on the notice board to share with everyone and all children and parents were made aware of sustainable transport. Similarly, this happened when a parent came in with a baby carrier to walk their child home at the end of the day. Everyone becomes enthused through these examples and the links between health and sustainability are also highlighted.

Western Port Secondary College (staff story)

Hannah recounts: “I had our plumber out the other day to work around with the Active Learning boys [a program for students who are likely to undertake a professional trade] because we want to write an application for a grant to get a tank to collect water from The Learning Centre which is a house where our integration kids go to get extra help. The plumber walked around with them all and did a site assessment of the potential places for tanks ...The boys were having discussions as apprentices would with him, and they got a huge amount of material from him, but also he threaded in the stuff about the importance of knowing your maths and your English and literacy and filling out invoices and he talked about the importance of maintaining your equilibrium and keeping an even temperament because you’ll have to deal with difficult clients, that you just can’t lose your temper. The social learning and workplace learning that they got out of that hour with him was phenomenal.”

8.3.4 Perseverance and resilience

When implementing SCLPfS, staff, community members and students all need resilience and perseverance. Sometimes activities do not go to plan; for example, delays in regulatory approval, rejection of grant applications, failure to be elected into a desired role. At other times, losses occur; for example, vandalism, the death of plants and animals. Participants advised us that when disappointments occur, it’s important to refocus on your vision and to look at the positive outcomes that have occurred and ultimately to persevere.

Regulations and delays:

Altona North and Altona Meadows Children’s Centres (community story)

Sometimes regulatory matters can slow down change and hinder partnerships, for example it was difficult to convince some council people that the clothesline was a workable safe idea that would not contravene any regulations. It was finally approved, but took lengthy report writing and meetings to resolve. So, it takes time and can be frustrating educating other people about early childhood centre sustainability and why it’s important.

Hawkesdale P12 College (community story)

In addition, it involved learning patience, for example sometimes learning that large organisations do not make decisions quickly. At one time the group was waiting for three months for a decision and that is where the Youth Development Officer role involved using creative strategies so that the young people would not lose interest. In this regard food played an important role! Also a sense of humour and community support was important.

Disappointments and resilience:

Montrose Primary School (combined story)

Tom agreed and says it also helps you to develop another important life skill: resilience. As Tom stated, “It makes you feel happy if you get one [a student sustainability club role] that you really, really wanted; but if you don’t get it you’ll have to be resilient”. Asked what he meant by being ‘resilient’ he went on to explain, “Well you just keep on going with your life, you don’t be sad about it. You just forget about it and keep on going”.

The Patch Primary School (community story)

Kate admired how Michelle turned negatives into positives. During the school holidays there had been some minor vandalism where people had broken some trees and burnt them in the pizza oven. When Michelle and the kids found it they started talking about how one log was only half burnt. They talked about how some plants are resistant to fire and since the school is in a high-risk bushfire zone they decided to study what plants are fire retardant and what that means. The students are now developing plans for a fire retardant garden, which will get built in the school grounds.

8.4 Reflective questions

Answering the following questions provides an opportunity for you to reflect on the material covered in this section of the Guidebook and its application to your current or desired SCLPfs.

School factors

How much of your own time do you spend on SCLPfs? Is this sustainable in the long term? What are the personal costs and benefits of what you do?

How do you avoid burnout?

How much paid time and budget is provided to assist you with implementing SCLPfs?

If none, have you asked for any paid time or budget? How would you do this?

If you feel there is a need to increase recognition of the value of SCLPfs, what small project could you do to get some win-win outcomes and prove the effectiveness of partnerships?

What grants and funding can you apply for? (If you are successful you may find the Principal supports you to implement new projects.)

What is the impact of your school size? Does it make it harder or easier to implement SCLPfs? How do you deal with the size issues? (Consider contacting other similar sized schools and asking how they conduct effective SCLPfs.)

How strong is the sustainability ethos at your school? Has sustainability been incorporated into meeting agendas, staff recruitment criteria, new student family information packs? Outline what would be needed for this to occur.

Location factors

Is there an active school cluster in your area? If not, are you interested in canvassing nearby schools to see if they would be interested in starting one? What steps would you need to take to do this?

What does your local government do for schools in sustainability education? (Some local governments facilitate teacher environment networks; regional student sustainability networks or projects; and provide funding support for activities.)

What is the level of community cohesiveness in your location? Is it a transient population or is it very stable with several generations of families who have lived there?

How does the level of community cohesiveness affect the implementation of your SCLPfS projects?

What SCLPfS projects could be done to enhance community cohesiveness?

What projects can you conduct in natural locations or with partners that are within walking distance of your school?

Personnel factors

How many staff in your school are currently involved in SCLPfS activities?

Which staff and community members can you rely on to regularly assist you with your SCLPfS activities?

What roles do they undertake? (For example, supervising student sustainability club activities, embedding activities into their classes, allowing students out of class to do activities, participating on sustainability committees, helping with the gardening.)

How have you approached other staff to see if they are willing to be involved in SCLPfs? (For example, notice on staff noticeboards, general face-to-face conversations, targeted conversations with key staff who could undertake a specific role.)

What roles do your community partners undertake?

Are activities structured so that your community partners can undertake a wide variety of roles from planning, organising, implementing and evaluating?

What professional development needs do staff and community partners have in order to implement SCLPfs activities? (For example, developing skills in managing classes outdoors, facilitating student-led learning projects.)

How do you deal with disappointments that occur with SCLPfs? (For example, vandalism, death of animals and plants, students upset at not getting elected on to sustainability clubs or committees, unsuccessful grant applications, lack of support and approval for planned projects.)

How do you celebrate your achievements small and large in SCLPfs? (Frequent celebration helps to maintain enthusiasm and commitment. It helps to build resilience and perseverance in those involved, encouraging them to keep going through challenging times.)

9 CONCLUSION – WHAT NEXT?

We have seen that the case study schools and their communities are conducting a wide range of activities and partnerships. They have achieved fantastic outcomes for the students, the school, the community partners and the environment. Funding for partnership activities remains a challenge with much time taken up writing grant applications. A number of alternative ways to raise funds were shared by case study participants, providing readers with ideas that they can use. Overall, funding still remains a key issue limiting School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (SCLPfS) and is one that needs to be addressed if partnership activities are to expand.

We have seen a shift from activities with students being undertaken by a ‘champion teacher’ to many schools funding a part- or full-time ‘Sustainability Coordinator’ who coordinates activities across the school with several staff involved. Some schools have a student ‘Sustainability Club’ in which much of the partnership activity occurs. Some have a ‘Sustainability Specialist Subject’ and others are focusing on embedding sustainability across the curriculum. Different approaches in implementing SCLPfS are likely to be taken at each school as staff explore the most effective way to work with the opportunities and constraints they face.

We have seen that activities are being undertaken within the school grounds, in the community, and increasingly across a region with schools working together in partnership activities. This trend is likely to continue as local governments work with their schools to encourage partnerships for sustainability. Teacher Environment Networks and Regional Student Sustainability Networks appear to be on the increase. Flowers and Chodkiewicz (2009) report that many local governments in NSW are also establishing Teacher Environment Networks and providing support for SCLPfS.

Local governments are also providing funding and in some cases developing professional development and resource materials. In a sense they are forming a ‘Partnership Broker’ role, assisting schools with knowledge of potential community partners and funding possibilities. Black (2008b) argues that local governments and not-for-profit organisations have the potential to provide this brokerage service to schools on a wider basis. She advises that:

The success of any network depends on the capacity of the people who participate in it. If Australian schools are to work together with other agencies without placing stress on already scarce resources, professional training and support is needed. School leaders need training in effective network leadership, teachers need professional learning about how to work cooperatively both within and between schools, and school and community sector staff need training in how to work together in the most mutually supportive way. As well as skilling

the existing workforce, new roles should be funded to support and strengthen collaboration. These could include partnership brokers, network coaches, cross-sectoral liaison staff. (Black, 2008b p108)

Although not explored in this research, the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions – a joint initiative of the federal, state and territory governments – includes a funded project (2010–2013) known as the School Business Community Partnership Broker (SCPB) scheme (DEECD, 2009). This involves ‘building partnerships that support improved education and transition outcomes for all young people’ (DEEWR 2011). In Victoria, this work is carried out by Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs). Staff employed under this scheme are known as partnership brokers. An example of work relevant to this research was a home sustainability assessment program (igreen) that was piloted as a Year 10 elective at Mill Park Secondary College. The program was brokered by the Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network (HWLLEN) Partnership. The SCPB scheme is one example of a funded program that supports and strengthens collaboration.

Black (2008b p22) reports that ‘...the Tasmanian Government (Department of Education Tasmania, 2006) is trialling one version of this model by introducing school–community partnership officers who work with school leaders, businesses, parents and community organisations to develop partnerships that improve student outcomes.’ Such support for partnerships is clearly needed if we want to see an expansion of partnership activities within schools.

Beside SCLPfS, there are a range of reasons why partnerships are becoming increasingly important for schools:

- For school development and reform – to achieve improved learning outcomes through partnerships with maths and science, technology organisations (Tytler et al. 2008), through partnerships with the professional arts sector (DEECD 2009) and partnerships with families (Department of Education, Science and Training 2006).
- For community development – schools as a hub for community learning and activities, networks with co-location of health and support services for families (ACER 2008; Black 2008; Kilpatrick et al. 2003). Such schools are known as extended schools (United Kingdom), integrated schools (Scotland), and community schools (United States). A similar trend is occurring within Australia with encouragement of co-location of facilities by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in their 2008 Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform (Black 2008).
- For students to develop workplace skills – through partnerships with businesses that are increasingly targeting schools as a part of their corporate social responsibility activities (Black 2008; ACER 2008; Cole 2008; Tytler et al. 2008). In Victoria some funding from the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions scheme

is used on the Workplace Learning Coordinators Program. Project officers source relevant structured work placements, School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) and work experience in industry areas with strong vocational outcomes. Through the program, employers can link with secondary students from the local area. Workplace Learning project officers provide a brokering role between the employer and the secondary school (DEECD 2010).

Steele and Singh (2008) discuss the national policy push for more partnerships in the EfS, Welfare and VET Sector with schools and communities. They recognise the unrealistic challenge placed on schools to establish and maintain multiple partnerships for different purposes. They call for a merging of EfS and VET sector and Welfare Sector programs, recommending staff in those agencies undertake dialogue to generate unified projects for schools. This would achieve multiple aims and require less time from school personnel. The crowded curriculum and lack of resources and time of school staff make this an imperative.

The Department of Education, Science and Training (2006 p.28) concur. Their study of 61 school–community partnerships led to the following recommendation:

Recommendation 8: That the work of schools in building community capacity and social capital be recognised as an emerging responsibility of schools in contemporary Australia, and be resourced accordingly. It should be promoted and encouraged so that over time it becomes part of the core function of schools. It seems to us that money invested here at all levels of government would be repaid several times over in the beneficial effects of improved educational outcomes and better functioning communities. Not only this, but the community are already voting with their feet: they are increasingly turning to schools for this kind of assistance. Not to recognise this reality leaves schools caught between trying to meet these increasing demands from the community and lack of the resources necessary to do so. How this should be done is a political question.

These are just some of the trends and key issues that are occurring within the field of school and community partnerships. It is our hope that the examples and ideas presented in this Guidebook make it easier for school and community personnel to develop effective School–Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability.

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11 APPENDICES

The appendices give greater detail about the case study schools and the activities that they have done in partnership with their communities. It is hoped that the various appendices will provide an easy way for you to look up which stories are most relevant to your situation and the types of SCLPfS activities that you are currently doing or wanting to do.

For instance, you may be interested in finding out more about wetlands and how schools have been involved with them. You can use Appendix 11.1 Case study activities by theme to look up which schools and their communities were involved in wetlands. You may then want to read the full stories associated with those case study site/s. In some cases the participants may have mentioned each issue very briefly, so you may not find the level of detail you want. However, once you have read it, you could then contact the school/s to ask them for further details or advice.

You may be wondering what you could do in your particular subject or with your age group of students. Appendix 11.2 Case study activities by subject and grade level will assist you to see examples of what is being done by particular subjects and grade levels at the case study schools.

Appendix 11.3 Overview of case studies provides an overview of the SCLPfS conducted at the case study sites. The appendix contains school details, including name, location, region, sector, type and enrolment size. It also includes a summary of the partnership activities conducted, including main partners, activities done, teaching methods used, year levels involved, whether the activity has been incorporated into subjects or not and whether the school is involved in Resource Smart AuSSI VIC.

The final three Appendices 11.4 to 11.6 contain example stories of the SCLPfS conducted at the case study sites. Appendix 11.4 is a story from a childcare centre, Appendix 11.5 is an example story from a primary school, and Appendix 11.6 is an example from a P-12 college. These are just samples. All of the case study stories are available on the RMIT website⁴.

⁴ <http://www.rmit.edu.au/northernpartnerships/school-community-partnerships>

11.1 Appendix: Case study activities by theme (activity)

Animals

- Balnarring Primary School
- Montrose Primary School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School

Audits & Consultation – home, community

- Altona North & Altona Meadows Children's Centres
- Balnarring Primary School
- Hawkesdale P12 College

Biodiversity – in school grounds

- Altona North & Altona Meadows Children's Centres
- Balnarring Primary School
- Montrose Primary School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- The Patch Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College

Biodiversity – outside school

- Balnarring Primary School
- Hawkesdale P12 College
- Mill Park Secondary College
- Port Fairy Consolidated School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Monica's College
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School
- Woodleigh School

Bird nesting boxes

- Hawkesdale P12 College
- Port Fairy Consolidated School

Charity – collect donations

- St Jude's Primary School

- Tooradin Primary School
- Woodleigh School

Club and team activities

- Balnarring Primary School
- Mill Park Secondary College
- Montrose Primary School
- Port Fairy Consolidated School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- St Monica's College
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- The Patch Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College

Cooking (not SAKGP)

- Doveton North Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School

Community education

- Balnarring Primary School
- Port Fairy Consolidated School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- The Patch Primary School

Community service

- Woodleigh School

Concrete couches

- Balnarring Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College

Conferences

- Balnarring Primary School
- Doveton North Primary School
- Hawkesdale P12 College
- Mill Park Secondary College
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- St Monica's College

- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College

Eco-centre

- Balnarring Primary School
- The Patch Primary School
- Woodleigh School

Energy-related activities

- Altona North & Altona Meadows Children's Centres
- Balnarring Primary School
- Hawkesdale P12 College
- Mill Park Secondary College
- Port Fairy Consolidated School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College

Frogs (for example, Frog Watch/Frog Bog)

- Mill Park Secondary College
- Montrose Primary School

igreen Program

- Mill Park Secondary College

Indigenous Australians, activities relating to

- St Jude's Primary School
- Woodleigh School

Mentoring

- Port Fairy Consolidated School
- St Monica's College

Mural

- Balnarring Primary School
- Doveton North Primary School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School

Outdoor classroom

- Balnarring Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College

Pizza oven

- Balnarring Primary School

ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic

- Balnarring Primary School
- Mill Park Secondary College
- Montrose Primary School
- Port Fairy Consolidated School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- St Monica's College
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College
- Woodleigh School

Selling own produce

- St Jude's Primary School
- Port Fairy Consolidated School

Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program (SAKGP)

- Port Fairy Consolidated School
- Tooradin Primary School

Sustainable transport

- Altona North & Altona Meadows Children's Centres
- St Jude's Primary School
- St Monica's College
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School
- Woodleigh School

Vegetable garden

- Altona North & Altona Meadows Children's Centres
- Balnarring Primary School
- Doveton North Primary School
- Montrose Primary School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School

- St Jude's Primary School
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- The Patch Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School

Waste reduction – recycling & composting

- Altona North & Altona Meadows Children's Centres
- Balnarring Primary School
- Hawkesdale P12 College
- Mill Park Secondary College
- Montrose Primary School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- The Patch Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School

Water-related activities

- Altona North & Altona Meadows Children's Centres
- Balnarring Primary School
- Mill Park Secondary College
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- St Monica's College
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School

Water Watch

- Mill Park Secondary College
- St Jude's Primary School
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- The Patch Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School

Wetlands

- Balnarring Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- St Monica's College
- The Patch Primary School
- Mill Park Secondary College

Wildlife reserve

- Woodleigh School

Work experience

- Port Fairy Consolidated School

Workshops/PD for other schools

- Doveton North Primary School
- Mill Park Secondary College

11.2 Appendix: Case study activities by subject and grade level

Subject

Art

- Balnarring Primary School
- Mill Park Secondary College
- The Patch Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College

Biology

- St Monica's College

Commerce

- The Patch Primary School

Environment specialist subject

- Hawkesdale P12 College
- Mill Park Secondary College
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Monica's College
- The Patch Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College

Film making – communication technologies

- Balnarring Primary School

History

- St Jude's Primary School

Literacy

- St Jude's Primary School
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School

Marine Science

- Woodleigh School

Maths

- Doveton North Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- St Monica's Primary School

- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- The Patch Primary School
- Western Port Secondary College

Music

- Balnarring Primary School
- Mill Park Secondary College
- St Jude's Primary School
- The Patch Primary School

Religious studies

- St Monica's College

Science

- Balnarring Primary School
- Doveton North Primary School
- Mill Park Secondary College
- St Jude's Primary School
- St Monica's College
- Western Port Secondary College

VCAL

- St Monica's College

Woodwork

- Mill Park Secondary College

Year Level

Kindergarten

- Altona North & Altona Meadows Children's Centres

Prep

- Port Fairy Consolidated School

Grades 1 to 2

- Port Fairy Consolidated School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- The Patch Primary School

Grades 3 to 4

- Balnarring Primary School
- Doveton North Primary School
- Montrose Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- The Patch Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School

Grades 5 to 6

- Hawkesdale P12 College
- Montrose Primary School
- Port Fairy Consolidated School
- St Francis of the Fields Primary School
- St Jude's Primary School
- Strathfieldsaye Primary School
- The Patch Primary School
- Tooradin Primary School

Years 7 to 9

- Hawkesdale P12 College
- Mill Park Primary School
- St Monica's College
- Western Port Secondary College

Years 10 to 12

- Mill Park Secondary College
- St Monica's College

11.3 Appendix: Overview of each case study⁵

Name	Altona North/Meadows Children's Centres	Balharring Primary School	Doveton North Primary School ⁶	Emerald Primary School
Location	Altona North 3025/Altona Meadows 3028	Balharring 3926	Doveton 3177	Emerald 3782
Region	Metropolitan (inner south west)	Metropolitan (outer south east)	Metropolitan (outer south east)	Metropolitan (outer south east)
Sector	Government (Council)	Government	Government	Government
Type	Early Childhood /kindergarten	Primary	Primary	Primary
Enrolment size (2010)	Approx. 50-60 per centre	376	362	416
Main partners	Business, parents/families, local government – council, other schools	Business, community groups, community volunteers, parents/families, local government, state government, other schools, parks/gardens organisations, service providers, not-for-profit/philanthropic sector, government organisations	Business, community groups, community volunteers, parents/families, local government, parks/gardens organisations, service providers, other schools, local government, state government, not-for-profit sector, government organisations	Business, community centre, community groups, community volunteers, parents/families, government departments or governing organisations, local government, former students
Partnership activities	Contributions to Council 'Green Kinders Toolkit'; staff PD on 'green cleaning'; 'Recycle Ted' home recycling diary initiative; redevelopment of centre grounds (water tanks, native plantings); energy audits of the centre (and subsequent changes such as clothes lines/cloth nappies/sensor lights); promotion of sustainable transport; construction of vegetable garden; donations and other contributions from parents/family – materials/working bees/fund raising/one-off jobs	Construction of a pizza oven and 'concrete couch' recycled outdoor furniture project; planning and construction of Bimblemeer sustainability area within the school grounds (chicken coups/animal shelter/vegetable garden beds); development of wetland/woodland area including a wetlands committee; community education workshops and professional development sessions; community working bees – plantings, bird hide, building paths etc.; professional development and workshops for other schools, home audits	Garden ambassadors program; Workshops/PD with Myuna farm for garden design and maintenance; speaking at conference; workshops for visiting schools; organic veggie garden plot in the local community garden; veggie garden in the school grounds; cooking program (with own produce), sustainability committee	Home energy audits; creation of a Frog Bog; student council; walking school bus/sustainable transport to school; Solar in Schools initiative; biodiversity initiatives outside the school, vegetable garden
Teaching methods used / context of learning and teaching	Reflective journal; water play; participatory/hands on (veggie garden); role modelling of behaviour	Curriculum outside the classroom; extracurricular club; methods - hands on/experiential	Curriculum outside the classroom; extracurricular activities; methods – hands on/experiential/kids teaching kids/project management/Reflective journal, blogs, wikis or websites	Extracurricular club; methods – kids teaching kids blog/wiki
Year levels involved	Kindergarten	Grade 3	Grade 3-4s; P-6 (sustainability curriculum for all years)	
Incorporated into subjects	N/A	Film making – communication technologies, music, science, art	Maths, science	
Resource Smart AuSSI Vic	N/A	Yes	No	Yes

5 All data reported in this publication was, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, correct at the time of collection, which occurred at different times throughout 2009 to 2011.

6 Following the collection of data for the Doveton North Primary School case study, the school has participated in a merger and is now known as Doveton Primary School. Conversations on School-Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability (A Guidebook)

Name	Hawkesdale P12 College	Mill Park Secondary College	Montrose Primary School	Port Fairy Consolidated School
Location	Hawkesdale 3287	Mill Park 3082	Montrose 3765	Port Fairy 3284
Region	Provincial (south west Vic)	Metropolitan (outer north/north east)	Metropolitan (outer eastern)	Provincial (south west Victoria)
Sector	Government	Government	Government	Government
Type	Combined	Secondary	Primary	Primary
Enrolment size (2010)	254	1644	421	205
Main partners	Families, business, community groups, community volunteers, government departments or governing organisations, local government, state government, service providers, higher education institutions (through international student volunteers), other schools, catchment management authority, kindergarten	Business, families, government departments or governing organisations, local government, state government, other schools – primary and secondary, service providers	Business, community groups, parents/families, local government, other schools, service providers	Business, community groups, community volunteers, families, former teachers, government departments or governing organisations, local government, service providers
Partnership activities	Improving/redevelopment of local parks and reserves: walking tracks, revegetation, interpretive signs, rotundas etc.; Moyne Shire 'Our PlayYce' youth leadership program; biological control for bridal creeper; revegetation of habitat and bird-nesting boxes for the Orange-bellied Parrot; tree planting projects, for example 444,000 Trees project; River Health conferences; energy-reduction initiatives; waste reduction initiatives in the school and community	Water testing/monitoring: Water Watch, River detectives program; conferences (presenting, attending and running their own); Teacher Environment Network (TEN); primary school education day; tree plantings, learning frog calls, improving habitat for local wildlife	Creation of a Frog Bog; construction of veggie garden; chicken coop; water tanks, environmental committee	Habitat plantings for the Orange-bellied Parrot; conferences (holding/attending); fundraising; Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program; refurbishment of the school to incorporate renewable energy; work experience for grade 6 at local restaurant, participation in community markets, mentoring with kinder students
Teaching methods used / context of learning and teaching	Extracurricular activities; methods: student-led learning, kids teaching kids; project management	Extracurricular club; methods: hands on/experiential, kids teaching kids, Reflective journal, blogs, wikis or websites, student-led learning, team activities	Extracurricular club; methods: kids teaching kids	Extracurricular club; methods: kids teaching kids, Reflective journal, blogs, wikis or websites
Year levels involved	Junior secondary (7–9), grades 5 and 6, year 9	Year 10, middle years campus (7–9), year 8	Grade 3–4, grade 5, grade 6	Prep, grade 1, grade 2, grade 5, grade 6
Incorporated into subjects	Environmental Science VCE subject	Art, music, woodwork, igreen elective subject		
Resource Smart AuSSI Vic	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Name	St Francis of the Fields Primary School	St Jude's Primary School	St Monica's College	Strathfieldsaye Primary School
Location	Strathfieldsaye 3551	Langwarrin 3910	Epping 3076	Strathfieldsaye 3551
Region	Provincial (central Vic)	Metropolitan (outer south east)	Metropolitan (outer north)	Provincial (central Vic)
Sector	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic	Government
Type	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Primary
Enrolment size (2010)	354	270	1864	496
Main partners	Business, community groups, volunteers, families, local government, other schools, parks or gardens organisations, service providers	Business, community volunteers, families, health organisation, higher education institution, local government, state government department, parks/gardens organisations, service providers, Academics from tertiary providers (Roger Holdsworth, Melbourne Uni), other schools	Business, community groups, government departments or governing organisations, higher education institution, local government, other schools, service providers, housing estate, university, catholic education office	Business, community groups, community volunteers, families, government departments or governing organisations, local government, state government, other schools, service providers, partners/family of staff members, former students
Partnership activities	Maintenance/sustaining farm animals and gardens; tree plantings; attending conferences; Solar in Schools program; community murals; vegetable patch; waste initiatives; stormwater initiatives; development of sporting/recreation facilities; community solar promotion	Raising chickens; visits with other schools to share sustainability ideas/conduct science experiments; sustainable transport initiatives (Travel Smart School); working bees: constructing vegetable plots and planting orchard, making pathways and gardens in the school grounds; cooking fresh produce in the kitchen; water testing / Water Watch; student action team PD; selling produce to parents; donation initiatives; Greenhouse Games	Tree plantings; water saving initiatives; seed propagation; wetlands activities; Solar Vehicle Challenge; Firestarter conferences; Restoring part of Darebin Creek (weed eradication/restoring biodiversity/fencing); open day at Aurora Estate; Teacher Environment Network; Enviro-buddies mentoring/education program with primary students; transition activities with feeder primary school	Water Watch / water monitoring; Box Ironbark revegetation projects; promotion of using bike paths; managing student congresses and online conferences; promoting earth hour and energy saving practices; Indigenous plant seedling propagation; RACV Energy Breakthrough Challenge; Human Powered Vehicles; attending conferences; community mural; water saving initiative ('shower challenge'); cooking produce from vegetable garden; community solar promotion; development of sporting/recreation facilities
Teaching methods used / context of learning and teaching	Extracurricular club; methods: kids teaching kids/ student-led learning	Curriculum outside the classroom; extracurricular club; methods: kids teaching kids/ project management/ student-led learning	Extracurricular club; methods: kids teaching kids/hands on/experiential	Extracurricular club; methods: hands on/experiential/ kids teaching kids/ student-led learning/ team activity; Reflective Journal, blogs, wikis or websites
Year levels involved	Grade 1, grade 5	Grades 3 and 4, grades 5 and 6	Year 8, year 9, year 10	Grade 3–4s, grades 5 and 6
Incorporated into subjects	Environmental education class	History, literacy, maths, music, science,	Environment specialist subject: VCE year 11, maths, religious studies, science, biology, VCAL	Literacy, maths
Resource Smart AuSSI Vic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Name	The Patch Primary School	Tooradin Primary School	Western Port Secondary College	Woodleigh School
Location	The Patch 3792	Tooradin 3980	Hastings 3915	Baxter 3911
Region	Metropolitan (outer east)	Provincial (on the fringe of provincial and outer south east metro)	Metropolitan (outer south east)	Metropolitan (outer south east)
Sector	Government	Government	Government	Independent
Type	Primary	Primary	Secondary	Combined (focus of case study is secondary/senior campus)
Enrolment size (2010)	303	247	676	759 (combined)
Main partners	Business, community volunteers, parents/families, higher education institution, other schools	Business, local sporting club, community groups, families, other schools, parks/gardens/wildlife organisations, service providers, volunteers organisations, correctional services, local government	Business, health organisations, higher educational institution, local government, parks/gardens organisations, service providers, other schools, consultants organisations, TAFE, health organisations	Community groups, community volunteers, local government, parks/gardens orgs, former students, zoo
Partnership activities	Community garden team (fundraising, design and development of garden, working bees, landscaping etc.); community education / open days; wetland redevelopment; built school eco-centre; participation in garden festival	Tree plantings and landscaping; Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program; Water Watch; Push cart and Human Powered Vehicle (HPV) program; showerhead exchange; community recycling; Go For Your Life; habitat plantings for Orange-bellied Parrot	Construction of garden; Concrete Couches project (recycled outdoor seating); sustainability forums	Bush week environmental event; community service camps (rubbish clean up, weeding, plantings etc.); development of wildlife reserve; community activities in wildlife reserve, attend sustainability summit, human powered vehicle program, Koala habitat development
Teaching methods used / context of learning and teaching	Curriculum inside and outside the classroom; extracurricular club; methods: hands on/experiential/ kids teaching kids/ project management/ student-led learning	Curriculum outside the classroom; extracurricular club; methods: hands on/experiential	Curriculum outside the classroom; extracurricular club; methods: administer environmental grant program/ hands on/experiential/ kids teaching kids/ team activities	Extracurricular activities; hands on/experiential
Year levels involved	Grade 1, grade 3–4s, grades 5 and 6	Grade 3–4s, grades 5 and 6	Year 7, year 9	Year 10, year 11
Incorporated into subjects	Art, commerce, environment specialist subject, maths, music		Art, maths, environmental science	Marine science/science
Resource Smart AuSSI Vic	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

11.4 Appendix: Example case study story – Altona North and Altona Meadows Children’s Centres

Baby steps for a greener future

By staff members Elicia, Jacinta, Giovanna, Maria and Glenn from Altona North Children’s Centre and Sue and Lin from Altona Meadows Children’s Centre; and community members Vince, Ania, Trudi, and Sharon. Story collected and written by Sue Elliott.

Creating a context

Altona North CC and Altona Meadows CC are managed by Hobson’s Bay Council and are similar in terms of the numbers and ages of children attending (Altona North CC 51 places and Altona Meadows CC 55 places) and staff employed (Altona North CC 16 staff and Altona Meadows CC 19 staff). Demographically the centres are quite different, Altona North CC is located in a middle class socioeconomic area and some families are from other cultures, while Altona Meadows CC is located in a lower socioeconomic area where about two thirds of the families are from other cultures and a significant number have minimal English skills.

The two centres have strengthened their relationship as a result of the council’s focus on improving the sustainability of the centres over recent years. The changes made in these centres and the information gained about sustainable early childhood centre operation is being developed into a council toolkit entitled ‘Green Kinders’ to be launched late in 2009. The toolkit will facilitate other early years centres operating in council owned buildings to make changes towards sustainability in line with council sustainability policy to be carbon neutral by 2020.

Getting started

Two starting points can be identified for the centres: redevelopment of the outdoor playspaces in response to the on-going drought and energy audits conducted by the council’s environment team.

About four years ago the impact of the drought on the outdoor playspace became evident. Staff and children were in the outdoor playspace every day; it was tangible and powerfully visual for everyone. The playspace was once green with grass and then, due to lack of rain, water restrictions and the high daily usage by children, became bare dirt. The drought and its impact was a social topic of discussion for both children and staff supported by the general media messages about water conservation. The children viewed old photographs of the green playspace and some did not recognise it and questioned where had all the grass gone. They readily made the connections between the lack of rain and plants dying and just this year the discussion extended to bushfires. The staff were uninspired by the dirt playspace and yet they highly valued outdoor play. They offered children the choice to play

indoors or outdoors every day and wanted to provide the best play opportunities possible, but the dirt, particularly on windy days, was a problem. Also, the outdoor equipment quickly became dirty and worn and pot-holes in the dirt became a health and safety issue identified by the department. The children were also tripping on the emerging mesh that had been under the original grass and parents made complaints about children falling on the hard dirt. All of these concerns led to the general redevelopment of the outdoor playspaces over several years, including installation of water tanks and native planting.

Both centres had been doing some recycling, but it was about two years ago that further steps were taken. It was a combination of circumstances: the Children's Services Coordinator at council was very responsive and interested in sustainability, the council was developing an environment team and the centre staff were keen to do more towards sustainability. So the council environment team conducted energy audits in both centres to identify what changes might be possible and then followed up by implementing some small energy saving changes such as placing the laundry light on a sensor system and adding reflectors to lights. Since the audits, the centre coordinators and staff have continued to exchange ideas with the Children's Services Coordinator and environment team such that sustainability has become part of regular meetings with council and in the centres.

The energy audits and playspace redevelopment created the starting points for broader on-going changes towards sustainability in both centres. As the stories of change evolved the following themes emerged.

The ongoing story of change: emerging themes

Embedding education for sustainability

Increasingly education for sustainability became part of the daily program and practices in both centres. Staff engaged in discussion about environmental issues, acted as role models and facilitated children's exploration of playspaces and materials. The children were key players in that they contributed many ideas that staff responded to and extended on through program planning. The children were very enthusiastic. To them it was not about sustainability; it was fun to tip their waste water on the plants and make something out of old boxes. For example, at Altona North CC a water tank building project developed from the children's interests in water, and at Altona Meadows CC a child arrived at the centre on their parent's bicycle and a member of staff took a photo to promote sustainable transport. All of these elements combined ensured that education for sustainability was embedded.

Connections between parents and the centre

Early childhood centres have strong partnerships with families to promote the best learning contexts for children. In these centres it was evident that values about sustainability were shared between the centres and many families. When families and centre staff are positively reinforcing values about sustainability, children receive consistent messages. At a more

practical level parents also contributed by supplying waste materials for play experiences and artwork, attending working bees, supporting fund raising and undertaking specific jobs such as painting, gardening and equipment repair. Parents regularly wrote in their children's individual portfolios about interests they had observed and this supported the staff program planning process. The staff, children and parents became part of a cycling of ideas and actions between home and the centre. For example, at Altona North CC a much loved teddy was patched by the children and became 'Recycle Ted'. Recycle Ted and an accompanying diary went home with a child each week for parents and children to add written or visual entries about what recycling Ted did with their family. As each successive family took Recycle Ted home, parents became more aware and shared recycling ideas through the diary.

Staff behaviour change

Staff behaviour in relation to sustainability changed over time as staff supported each other's engagement and creatively implemented more sustainable practices. Staff wanted to create a better sustainable working environment not just for themselves, but for children and families too. Daily practices around heating, lighting, paper use, cleaning and sourcing play materials changed to be more sustainable. Staff reminded each other about these daily practices, such as turning off lights and opening blinds or turning off heaters. Sometimes this was done surreptitiously by taping over switches! It was challenging for some staff, particularly those who thought that small changes would have no impact on the bigger picture of sustainability. It was about changing the thinking as well as the practices, and while it was sometimes hard and took time, there is now a new culture. Although a relatively new culture for the staff, the aim is for sustainability to be normal practice for young children.

Role modelling

Role modelling about sustainability was acknowledged as universal. Anyone can be a sustainable role model for anyone else in the centre communities: staff, children, parents and siblings. Beyond the centre communities there was the potential for the centres to be role models for others and this is happening as both centres are increasingly recognised for their sustainability practices. Staff may also work in other centres and become role models elsewhere. Parents are advocates for the centres and have spread the word in the local community. Combined with the work the centres have undertaken with the council and the media promotion, local parents are now actively choosing the centres because of their sustainability reputation. Parents are choosing natural outdoor playspaces, natural or recycled play materials over plastic and cloth nappies as an option and, in turn, they become role models for other local parents.

Cultural change from within

The involvement by council was made easier because the staff were so passionate about the environment with several staff being particularly strong advocates. It was important that the small changes for sustainability were not forced in a top down approach, but very much

arose from the passion and commitment of the coordinator and staff. Each centre team developed their environmental goals and identified what was important for them to change in their practices. It happened because staff were not dictated to, but were consulted and involved in decision making throughout, and this is on-going. In essence the culture change came from within facilitated by council.

Leadership in the centres and wider community

The coordinators in both centres were positional leaders, but recognised as collaborative, responsive and supportive in their leadership style. They played a significant role in on-going communication with council, listening to staff ideas and reinforcing staff practices for sustainability. At Altona Meadows CC staff are rewarded by the 'green frog' with chocolates and at Altona North CC a 'green fairy' rewards staff with chocolates. The launch of the council toolkit 'Green Kinders' will be a major step in recognising the overall leadership role of both centres in the wider community, and will involve the coordinators and staff presenting to other local government early childhood centres information about sustainability. A new leadership role is beginning.

Financial considerations

Operating costs were reduced as a byproduct of sustainable practices. Savings on energy and water costs were made and many of the children's play materials were creatively reused items, rather than new manufactured items. As resource costs increase in the longer term, the centres already have cost effective practices in place and can utilise the funds saved on other equipment for the centres.

Over time these emerging themes have contributed to a greater sense of direction and whole centre progress towards sustainability.

Reflecting on the most significant change

It's not so much a most significant change, but all the small changes that added up to something significant. It is this cumulative process of change that becomes most significant. Small changes such as clotheslines, water tanks, cloth nappies, water saving buckets under the taps, sustainable transport and energy saving by 'peeing in the dark' have been implemented. To some new parents these appear unusual, but are now embedded as part of the centres sustainability practices. Now if you ask a staff member what are their environmental practices, they will find it hard to suggest anything because it is just normal daily practice to them and more importantly to the children.

All of these small changes or practices are being modeled and discussed with the children daily and taken home by the children. For example, one two-year-old advised her mother not to tip the waste water down the sink, but put it on the vegetable garden. Parents are discussing sustainability, adopting practices to make their family life more sustainable and

supporting the centres practices. Ultimately, all these small changes are being recognised in the wider community too.

Overall, it's been about changing the way people think and the way people behave through many small achievable steps that compound and can make a big difference. The steps have been environmental and social and did not happen overnight, but in the longer term children will live their lives more sustainably as a direct result of these many small steps.

Facilitating factors

A range of factors, socio-cultural, organisational and instrumental, facilitated the change towards sustainability in the centres. The council policy to be carbon neutral by 2020 created an organisational benchmark for working towards sustainability on all fronts for the council, including the operation of early childhood centres. The partnership between the council environment team and the centre was very productive; not only were instrumental energy saving changes made as a result of the audits, but a reciprocal relationship developed. The environment team was accommodating of staff requirements and adopted an advisory role. The centre staff and coordinators viewed the council and Children's Services Coordinator as receptive and responsive as they shared ideas and potential actions to improve sustainable practices.

At the centre level a socio-cultural climate of collaborative and mutually supportive relationships supported and promoted change. Staff were listened to and potential actions conveyed via effective communication channels. Also, importantly staff were committed and persistent and became more knowledgeable and skilled about sustainability practices over time. The staff worked hard and shared their passion and this impacted on the children and parents. Parents were very supportive and key players in the partnership. So the process of working towards sustainability became very much a shared team approach.

Beyond the centres, awareness of changing community expectations about sustainable practices and the impacts of various media created further impetus for change towards sustainability. Lastly, change in small achievable steps determined by each centre was an important facilitating factor.

Room for improvement

The partnerships established could have been made stronger by more parent information or expo type events, staff training and a different approach to regulatory matters. The partnership between the centres, council and parents could have been made stronger by greater flow information in some areas, for example energy savings following the audits could have been communicated via posters or newsletters. More events could have been held to engage parents and extend into the wider community to share and promote what the centres were doing about sustainability.

The council provided a training session on green cleaning and some staff accessed additional sustainability training through the organisation Environmental Education in Early Childhood Vic Inc. However, this training required funding and staff replacement during the day; more funded training after hours would be useful.

Sometimes regulatory matters can slow down change and hinder partnerships, for example it was difficult to convince some council people that the clothesline was a workable safe idea that would not contravene any regulations. It was finally approved, but took lengthy report writing and meetings to resolve. So, it takes time and can be frustrating educating other people about early childhood centre sustainability and why it's important.

Looking to the future

In looking towards the future there are a number of possibilities. The staff are keen to engage children in more sustainability projects and the babies areas are a priority for more sustainable practices. The centre cleaning is an issue to address too, because although the staff employ sustainable cleaning practices during the day, they have limited input into the council cleaning that occurs each night. As the cleaning is managed by another council area it will require some discussion. Another task is to develop an environmental management purchasing plan, so that there are clear guidelines about assessing which products to purchase. The council has started work in this area and made connections with Eco Buy, but there is still much to do. The design of centre buildings needs to be more sustainable, whether it's a new building or a retrofit. While it may cost more initially, there are significant cost savings to be made in the longer term and it's just more sustainable. As the 'Green Kinders' toolkit is launched*, the centres will take on a leadership role mentoring and inspiring other centres about taking baby steps towards sustainability.

Update 2012: The Green Kinder Kit was launched in late 2009 by Hobsons Bay City Council as the first stage of their plan to promote sustainability in council early childhood services. This launch was followed by a training program for all early childhood educators in council services. A second stage is now underway in which early childhood centre buildings are being retrofitted to maximise water and energy conservation. Visit the Hobsons Bay City Council website to download a copy of the booklet 'Green Kinders – A Guide to Reducing the Environmental Footprint of Child Care Centres' (http://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/files/83ac291c-f680-424c-83ca-9fdf00cbac44/Carbon_Neutral_GreenKinders.pdf).

11.5 Appendix: Example case study story – The Patch Primary

Empowering action for sustainability

By The Patch Primary School staff members Michelle, Lynne, Judy, Angie, and Sophia; community members Kate, Rosie, and Mark; and students James, Kyle, Callum, Jarod, Gaya, Amy, and others. Story collected and written by Jodi-Anne Smith.

The Patch Primary is an inspirational story of what is possible when the school and community unite with a shared vision. They have turned a degraded dam into a wetland and an unused, muddy, sloped area of the school grounds into a beautiful garden and eco-centre. The eco-centre cost \$40,000 to build and was achieved through fundraising initiatives, through materials donated by local businesses and through staff and community members donating their time and skills to build it. It was also supported out of global budget funds as the previous Principal chose to invest in the eco-centre knowing that unlike computers it would not need to be upgraded every few years. He could see that having the eco-centre and a full-time specialist environmental education teacher, Michelle, could be a drawcard for enrolments and further develop the environmental ethos of the school. Michelle now has lessons with every class once a week in the garden and eco-centre. Sophia, the art teacher, also holds many of her classes in the garden. It took two years to build and is constantly evolving.

Empowerment and fun are key themes throughout the stories at the Patch Primary. Community members said that the school has a very open and welcoming culture. They feel at home there and are given the opportunity to be involved in many different ways. For instance the Garden Team, consisting of staff, parents and community members, do fundraising, and organise three to four working bees a year, events and the pickup and delivery of donated materials. They do the correspondence too, including thankyou letters to donors and try to keep everyone informed about what is occurring with the garden and eco-centre. The team members give their time, share their skills and knowledge doing gardening, construction jobs and landscaping. They enjoy the informal nature of their meetings, the friendships they build, the satisfaction that comes from seeing what they've achieved and seeing the students learning. Kate commented how her daughter who is in Grade 1 is now more confident around animals and "she just loves all those garden jobs that she might once have considered boring, like spreading mulch. Now she sees them as fun activities".

The students confirmed this. Callum explained if Michelle wants some measuring done "then all the kids want to measure it and they don't really know that they're doing maths but they actually are". Another student added, "You don't realise that you're learning something because it's so fun". The students were active participants in designing and developing the garden. The students researched garden designs and developed some individual and team plans. They then built models of their plans using kitty litter, sand, gravel, bark, twigs, clay

and blue glass. Michelle took them through a project design process to develop their preferred garden layout. All grades used their maths skills to measure the garden site using footsteps, knotted string and tape measures to create a scale-based plan. They also used string lines and laser levels to calculate the slope, with their final calculations falling within 30cm of those of the professional surveyors.

The students expressed appreciation of the opportunities they are given. Callum described how he likes it that Michelle makes them do the water testing in the wetlands rather than doing it herself. Gaya added it was the same when they went on TV – it wasn't the adults doing it, the kids did. The school's garden and eco-centre has been profiled on ABC's Gardening Australia Program as well as a program on Channel Ten's 9am with David and Kim program. They have also won several awards.

The students are now empowered to plan and develop gardens in other areas of the school grounds using the same planning process, consulting with all students in the school about what they want. For instance Grades 3 and 4s are restoring a site to create a living landscape. Grade 5 students are developing a fire retardant garden. Grade 6 students are creating tree trails, special places in nature where they feel a connection. They design games and activities to teach the younger kids about their chosen tree and its lifecycle. Students in the Young Environmental Protectors (YEP) also teach the younger students about sustainability issues. They visit the classrooms once a week to eat lunch with the students and play educational games. They also conduct the rubbish free lunches, auditing the bins and allocating rewards to the winning class.

The students also take their messages home. Rosie remarked how "I can remember [my daughter] coming home and testing the soil at home and telling me what type of soil we had long before I got around to doing it... Students also tell parents off 'Yeah, that should be in the other waste bin. Turn off that light and turn off the plugs.' They all turn everything off at the plugs. That's the way now. It's just habit with them which is really good". These changes in student attitudes were beautifully summed up by Amy who said, "In the library she [Michelle] always used to lend videos because that was a reward that kids wanted, but the only thing kids really want now is tomatoes and strawberries".

Sustainability education is also occurring for the community with the school participating in the 'Inspiring in Spring Dandenong Ranges Garden Festival' in 2009. Community members could tour the school's garden, do activities such as painting pots, propagating plants, building a bush tepee, and making a scarecrow. There were four free lectures as well. One was on growing green roofs. Another was on the story of the development of the school's garden and eco-centre. Another was on designing children's landscapes. The fourth was by Andy Laidlaw, the landscape architect at the Royal Botanic Gardens who talked about their Children's Garden. This was a community-building event that invited people not normally associated with the school to visit. Angie said that the "school should be providing education

for the whole community” and was keen to see more of this. They recently held a similar event in 2010 as a part of the Garden Festival.

There have been many significant changes at the Patch Primary School – the environmental outcomes, the community building, and the students growing connection with and respect for the environment are just a few.

11.6 Appendix: Example case study story – Hawkesdale P12 College

People power: together we achieve sustainability

By Hawkesdale P12 teaching staff Britt and Donald; students Kara, Hannah M, Hannah T and Emily; and community members Frank and Geraldine. Story collected and written by Leone Wheeler.

Hawkesdale P12 College is a small rural school in the Western District of Victoria. It has just over 260 students enrolled from preparatory to Year 12, mostly from farming backgrounds and surrounding regional townships. This story is really about people in this rural community who work together on school–community partnerships over many years to create a more sustainable environment for the township and great experiential and transformative learning experiences for students.

There are strong networks of community members, teachers, students and organisations who have worked in partnership for a number of years. In particular, the Hawkesdale and District Development Action Committee (HADDAC) and the Moyne Shire Council together with young people and teachers from the school have worked on projects in the township that are focused on improving the local parks and reserves (Apex Park, the Recreation Reserve and the Common), so that locals and tourists alike can enjoy them. Young people became involved as representatives on the Moyne Youth Council and the Moyne Shire's Our PlaYce Project. Three of these young people eventually became members of HADDAC. Through participating in these organisations young people have designed a recreational reserve sign promoting the clubs and users of the Recreational Reserve; worked on the design of a rotunda and an interpretive sign on the history of the area, and contributed to the design of the playground and BBQ at Apex Park. Frank and Geraldine noted that working on projects to improve the environment is complex because there are different management structures and so different approaches are often required for each project.

In addition, the Our PlaYce Youth Leadership Program, a joint enterprise by Moyne Shire Council and Warrnambool City Council, enabled young people from Hawkesdale P12 and five other regional municipalities to work on selected projects relevant to their respective area. The program is facilitated by Geraldine. The young people from Hawkesdale developed the idea of working with HADDAC on creating a walking track, including revegetation and the development of interpretative signs about local plant life and animal species at the Common. Geraldine said it is a stand out project because of the number of young people involved and also because of the strong partnerships with the school and HADDAC. It is not an easy project because the Common was a disused piece of land that had become overgrown and a fire hazard. However, the young people felt it was worthwhile and would be an additional facility for the township. It is a long-term project, which the young people started in Year 9, and on which they have made progress and worked together to

face barriers. However, by the end of 2010 when most of the students involved finished Year 12, they were able to complete the project in time for the 150th birthday celebrations in February 2011.

The students talked enthusiastically about this project – especially about the role of Geraldine. As one student said “She’s like the glue that sticks us all together”. The students started working on this when they were in Year 9 and are still working on this in Year 12, so it has been a long journey. They talked of what they had learnt along the way – general knowledge about climate change, how to make a difference and about the environment. They have also learnt practical skills such as writing tenders, developing presentations and getting building permits. These are skills they can put on their resume. They also pass on this knowledge to their families.

Geraldine was passionate about working on youth leadership projects. She saw the projects as way young people could build skills while also doing something to benefit the whole community. Geraldine sees her role as a facilitator and sometimes plays a “devil’s advocate” role. Geraldine is the intermediary between the community groups and the young people. It is also about changing perceptions of community members so that they become more receptive to the ideas of young people. Young people have enthusiasm, energy, creativity and the ability to think outside the box.

Geraldine thinks that the factors that have contributed to keeping young people involved include open communication, ensuring that young people own and run the projects – both the achievements and disappointments – allowing young people to run the meetings and ensuring that young people are the ones that will be reported in the local media for publicity purposes. When disappointments occur, Geraldine uses creative strategies so that the young people do not lose interest. In this regard, food played an important role, as did a sense of humour and community support.

Hawkesdale P12 also works with other partners on waste management, energy reduction, water conservation and biodiversity within the school environment. Don has worked for over 10 years with South West Waste Reduction Group and the Moyne Shire on strategies to assist the school become accredited as a Waste Wise school. Don points out that the school had used “an almost inexhaustible variety of different strategies” in the management of the consumption of materials and energy – particularly waste. Hawkesdale P12 at one stage also assisted the local Post Office and Kindergarten to manage their waste. After a time the school found that the price of processing the waste became prohibitive due to the price of fuel. The school also found that while teachers and students learnt a lot about the environment and waste management, everyone was spending far too much time feeding mulchers and processing waste, which was getting in the way of learning. Also there were increasing concerns about OH&S issues. Now the school’s tractor and mulcher sit in the shed and the school has scaled back these activities. The lesson learnt from this was that

the main reason to work in the environmental field is for educational purposes. The students, however, are benefiting from this experience because everyone at Year 9 gets exposure to the importance of waste management and biodiversity and this is what helped spark the interest of Hannah T, Kara, Hannah M, Emily and others to take part in the extracurricular sustainability activities on offer through HADDAC and other partners. The school also benefited as it is now much better at managing its waste and this in turn has influenced waste management of other organisations in the town. Waste can be a “hot” issue in a rural town as you do not have garbos coming on a weekly basis to remove rubbish and the project has generated debate about the best way to dispose of it.

Britt and other teachers work with community partners to ensure the students are provided with a range of authentic learning experiences that are incorporated into the curriculum. Britt described working with Years 7 to 9 students on a biological control for bridal creeper using leaf hoppers and rust. The students released the leaf hoppers in the culvert area to control bridal creeper. This project was sponsored by the Department of Primary Industry (DPI) who provided a Perspex cage and other equipment. Another project Britt was involved in was a partnership with the Department for Sustainability and the Environment (DSE) and international student volunteers. Year 9 students were involved in a revegetation project for the Orange-bellied Parrot. This involved propagating food and shelter species for the Orange-bellied Parrot and building and erecting bird boxes. This project lasted a few years and received great publicity for the school and the students. Each year students are involved in tree-planting projects at the school, on local farms and in community areas. Britt, as an environmental scientist, talks of aiming to have an environmentally conscious student in every family. Hawkesdale P12 benefits, as it is able to offer Environmental Science as a VCE subject, when numbers permit. Students who take part are also more aware of environmentally related careers pathways.

A further extracurricular activity that the students have been involved in is presenting their work at various River Health conferences. This started when they were in Year 9. Two years ago Hawkesdale students were on the steering committee for a River Health Conference held at Port Fairy – a conference held over two days involving 300 students from around the state, partnering with Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (GHCMA), Waterwatch and Firestarter.

The students talked about how they couldn't believe they were working on such large projects. They remember how it started in Grades 5 and 6 on a small scale by planting a few trees, but this grew and with the help of partners such as Landcare and HADDAC turned into the Planting 444,000 Trees Project! This was a theme throughout the story. Everyone started small, but incrementally over time, as people got ideas, added partners and resources the projects got larger and larger and no one seemed daunted by this! Sometimes they did face barriers or realised that a project had become too big and was taking resources away from the core business of the school (waste management project). Then adjustments

were made and the learning was used in other areas. In fact, Geraldine commented on teaching students to break a large project down into manageable chunks.

Networking is very strong in this community. People in small communities often wear multiple hats. Frank is a teacher at the school and also the secretary of HADDAC. Don is a teacher at the school, but also passionate about waste management in the region. Britt is the Environmental Science teacher at the school and has good links into environmental networks such as Hopkins-Moyne Landcare Network, the Victorian Association for Environmental Education (VAEE), the Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE), DSE and the GHCMA, and Geraldine is the link with the Moyne Shire. There is a sense of pride in improving the environment in the school and also in the township. The partnerships that have developed have enabled people to work on significant projects together. The young people interviewed feel they are respected and are listened to so there is a sense of trust. The participants learn and work together. They meet challenges and work out how to overcome them together. They don't want their projects labelled as "green" – it is more a matter of what you do to get change happening, so it is more like "sustainability" in the broadest sense of the word. Students, teachers and community members talked about the way things have grown incrementally over the last 10 years. Today a group of senior students at the school are working on a large project that they never would have believed they could have undertaken a few years ago.

All agreed that the most significant change was the development of the skills and abilities that students learn as a result of being involved in a number of environmental projects during their school years. These skills include leadership, confidence, communication, persistence, kids teaching kids, and the ability to tackle the bureaucracy of government to get things done. The students also mentioned tender writing and completing building permits! These are great transferable skills that will flow over into other areas of life and other projects. Teachers and community members expressed pride in watching young people develop over a period of time and young people reflected on how far they can go with a project. They realised if they wanted trees in their future life they have got to plant them now. All the projects they have worked on during their school years will leave a legacy for future students, for the community and for future generations. All agreed there are three key words – education, communication and partnerships – that drive sustainability.

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