



Sustainable Schools – Getting Started

Welcome to Sustainable Schools, your school has taken on an exciting and rewarding challenge. With enthusiasm, persistence and assistance from your QESSI Regional Hub you will achieve great things – good luck!

Twelve Key Elements for Success

Through many years of research into Sustainable Schools in other states, 12 key elements have been identified as essential for successful progression of schools from awareness of sustainability issues to leadership and behaviour change. The order in which schools address the key elements may vary but the outcomes are the same.

Introduction to QESSI	Collect baseline data
Make a whole school commitment	Build community links
Conduct an assessment / audit	Form a committee
Develop a policy	Set goals and targets
Develop curriculum plans	Develop action plans
Monitor and evaluate the program	Implement actions & curriculum plans

Key program tasks to get you started:

- Form an sustainable schools committee or team
- Complete a State of the School Report
- Develop School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP)
- Communicate – let your community know what you are doing
- Develop a school sustainability policy and vision statement (optional – or part of SEMP)

Task descriptions

Form a Committee

The purpose of having this committee is to ensure that not all the responsibility falls on a single person. It also ensures longevity of the program, even if the teacher or parent who instigated sustainable schools leaves the school the committee is well placed to continue with the program.

Your Sustainable Schools committee includes members from across the school community; students, teachers, parents, other school staff, representatives of community organisations and any other interested people.

An existing environmental committee, school development committee or other group can form the basis of your sustainable schools committee. For example, It may be possible to include a regular sustainable schools agenda item in all meetings of the existing committee and invite additional sustainable schools committee members such as students along to this part of the meeting.



Darling Downs QESSI Hub - Supporting schools in the Darling Downs & South West Queensland

www.qmdc.org.au

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Complete State of the School Report

School Summary

As the title suggests, a school summary is a basic summary of information about your school and any existing environmental or sustainability projects in your school. This information is important to provide a benchmark which can be used to measure future achievements.

Baseline Data

This is a place for your school to collate and record benchmark data about important measures of sustainability. This data measures the total energy, water use, paper use, waste production and the biodiversity and landscape health of your school. If you don't know where you are starting out at then you will not be able to measure future success and achievements. (It is also interesting to record details such as staff and student sick days and details of student engagement and behaviour.)

The easiest way to gather this information is to look at the invoices from your school's energy supplier, water supplier and waste contractor. You can also contact the suppliers directly and request an annual summary. In some things, such as amounts of solid waste composted, you will have to make estimates. For litter, you may need to conduct a simple litter survey.

Curriculum Audit

This is important to find out the extent of the environmental education activities and units of work already in your school. It may surprise you just how many teachers are already including these types of activities in their programs.

With this information, you will be able to plan to integrate environmental education across the school.

Audit of current environmental operations

The purpose of this part of the audit is to gather observations from staff, school management, students and student groups, school council and parents on existing environmental achievements, problem areas, and ideas for improvement. This process is a step towards engaging and involving your whole school community in the Sustainable Schools program.





Communicating with your Community

The families of the students at your school and many others in the local and even broader community may be very interested the Sustainable Schools program in your school.

You may like to include the following information in this communication:

- Results of your research e.g. Current costs of water use, energy use and waste disposal or amounts used.
- As you monitor the use of the resource you are targeting, report back to parents on any changes, e.g. since we started the program, we have introduced paper and cardboard recycling and this has cut the amount of waste produced by our school from one skip a week to one half a skip per week. This has saved our school \$XX so far this year.
- Simple tips for parents to introduce sustainable practices at home. e.g. recycling, composting, cutting energy and water use, planting native plants in their home gardens.
- Description of some of the activities that the children may be doing. e.g. Counting the number of lights in each room the school and graphing the results.

Sample article for newsletter or local press

Our school has been invited to participate in the Queensland environmentally Sustainable Schools Initiative (QESSI), a joint initiative of the Queensland and Australian governments. The program is coordinated locally by the Darling Downs QESSI Hub, a partnership between the Queensland Murray Darling Committee (QMDC) and Amaroo Environmental Education Centre. A facilitator from the Darling Downs QESSI Hub is working with our school.

This program will help us to run our school in a more sustainable way and allow the students to learn about sustainability and how to live in a way that will leave a lighter footprint on the planet. We have learnt that our school is spending \$XX on providing energy to our school, \$XX on water and \$XX on disposing of rubbish. We have developed a vision and a plan for our school that we hope will save our school money, engage our students in some practical activities while also helping the environment.





Policy

It is recommended that each school involved in the Sustainable Schools program adopt a policy formalising the school's commitment to sustainability. This will help ensure continuity despite changes in school staff and management. For example:

"XXXX School is committed to providing a caring and productive learning environment for all students.

XXXX School aspires to develop students who are positive contributors to our global community, with a passion for life-long learning and a respect for the environment, ready with the skills and motivation to take positive action in caring for our planet.

XXXX School is committed to a whole school approach to environmental sustainability. Careful use of our resources such as water and energy will lead to many gains for the school such as financial savings and environmental improvements. School actions will help to educate the wider community on how to live more sustainably.

A School Environmental Management Plan has been developed which outlines XXXX School's sustainability actions in the areas of curriculum and operations. "

Your hub coordinator can provide examples of other school's policies.



For More Information

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