

SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS NETWORK JOURNAL



The River School

Carmelo Fedele
Zara Malloy
Container Exchange
Louise Bahnson



Sustainable
SCHOOLS NETWORK
reimagining education

SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS NETWORK JOURNAL

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Cover courtesy of The River School

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JOYFUL DISCLAIMER

The SSN Journal is designed and created to share stories of how schools, teachers, organisations, students and parents educate for sustainability. This is not a 'how to' guide rather a collection of case studies aimed at inspiring action and inviting you to learn from others. Some people featured are just getting started, whilst others have been at this for a long time. We share these different perspectives to demonstrate the importance of the lived experience and the value of every point in the journey.

We invite your questions and contributions. Email us at info@ssn.org.au to share your story or to ask Dr. Ali a question.

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Indigenous Elders past, present and emerging.

ISSUE 14 CONTENTS

Dr Ali's EfS Musings	03
School Feature	06
Events Calendar	08
Teacher Feature	09
Student Feature	12
Organisational Feature	15
Parent Feature	17

Photo courtesy
of The River School



Minimising Risk of COVID19 Transmission

On 24 April 2020, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) released health advice in relation to reducing the potential risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools. With the 2020 influenza season looking particularly difficult with the added current concerns of the COVID19 crisis the outbreak of the disease has been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). While a lot is still unknown about the virus we do know it is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person generated through coughing and sneezing. While COVID-19 continues to spread it is important that school communities take action to prevent further transmission.

Creating Healthy Indoor Air Quality in Schools

It is generally recognised Australians spend 90% or more of their time indoors. Despite this, relatively little research has been done on the quality of air in our homes, schools, recreational buildings, restaurants, public buildings, offices, or inside cars. Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) affects the health and comfort of students and teachers and is among the many factors that contribute to learning and productivity in the classroom, which in turn affects performance and achievement. Providing a healthy, comfortable environment is an investment in your students and staff. By promoting a healthy learning environment at your school has a positive effect and can be measured in a reduction of absenteeism, an improvement in test scores and enhancement in student and staff productivity and wellbeing.



Airofresh Air Purification

AiroFresh Intl is an Australian technology company specialising in air purification. The company started in response to a need to create safe indoor spaces by removing mould, bacteria, toxic gases and viruses using new and innovative technologies which are a dramatic improvement on the traditional filter based systems. The Biological Control Units (BCU's) utilise a certified organic air purification process which has received Australian state and national innovation and sustainability awards.



Extensive testing with three separate Australian universities has confirmed the units are highly effective against bacteria, mould and toxic gases. The most recent university tests have shown a log13 (99.99%) first pass reduction in the test virus used to show effectiveness against COVID-19. The units are now being incorporated into health & fitness centres, schools and convention centres.

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DR. ALI SAMMEL'S EFS MUSINGS

What are the differences or similarities between Environmental Education (EE), Education for Sustainability (EfS) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)?



This is a great question, and to answer it, we need to go back to the start of educational endeavours associated with the natural environment in Western education.

It is my understanding that conservation education emerged as a way to promote National Parks, particularly in the US. It was a way to promote the conservation of scenery, historical objects and wildlife in those areas. It was mainly for the elite and offered little to those living in rural or urban poverty.

Conservation, nature studies, and outdoor education was then offered to schools, where students were taken on field trips or excursions to National parks or natural areas. The aim was to reconnect students with nature, and people with degrees in forest management created and ran these programs. Students in lower socioeconomic areas did not have the same access to these programs.

Rachel Carson's (1962) book *Silent Spring* prompted a movement away from observing nature, towards addressing issues of environmental degradation, environmental health and pollution. It orientated education towards a different philosophy - where students were asked to explore the way we, as individuals and societies, live, work and consume. In all schools, students were educated about how dominant social agendas and economies were tied into problems facing ecosystems.

Bill Stapp (a truly lovely man), first wrote about the concept of Environmental Education in 1969. Governments, industries and business began providing money to promote this agenda in schools as a public relation tool. Outdoor education programs continued to grow, but emphasised personal development through nature.

Over the next decades EE can be seen as dividing into two strands. The first focuses on building student's experiences with nature, so they could build capacities to appreciate, value, and protect it, because people are unlikely to preserve what they do not value. Developing a sense of place and connection to place is considered essential.

DR. ALI SAMMEL'S EFS MUSINGS



The second EE strand focuses on underlying causes of environmental problems - overpopulation, overconsumption, and climate change. This strand explores how people and organizations behave and what our economic system promotes at the expense of communities and nature. Essential in this strand is critiquing existing value systems and economic models while building capacities for problem solving. It focused on local manifestations of global problems.

Movement towards EfS emerged from the critique of EE for its desire to influence people's moral position, values and actions towards a predetermined and expert-driven outcome.

Questions emerge - what if students are taught to behave in a particular way, find out later that this was not the 'right' way after all? What if a certain behaviour appears sustainable in one part of the world, but is unsustainable in another part of the world?

Therefore, even though EfS explores similar EE agendas, its focus is on equipping students to build their own capacities to make sense of their world and to make their own judgments. It supports competencies allowing students to critique, construct, and act with a high degree of autonomy and self-determination unpinned with the belief that these skills are needed for citizens to be able to cope with uncertainty and conflicting values, interests, and realities.

However, contemporary EE and EfS blur and merge around emancipatory goals, with many just being distinguished by the name people choose to use. Whereas, education for sustainable development (ESD) is not predominantly positioned in local contexts and traditions, but rather results from international policy agreements and governance. It focuses on bigger picture understandings of sustainable human-life support systems, emphasising social equity, which is why some parts of the world have moved from EE to ESD.

In Australia, emancipatory pedagogies are gaining momentum, so too is the shift towards holistic thinking, empathy, compassion, and the rights of the more-than-human world. This is the research space I now play in, and I look forward to seeing what EfS continues to evolve towards.

*Please send your questions to Dr Ali via:
alison.sammel@ssn.org.au*

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The River School is a vibrant and diverse community where childhood is nurtured through mutual love and respect for all. It is a place where children feel safe, happy and free to learn ensuring a great foundation that will last them a lifetime. Students are supported to become confident learners and assisted with developing social and emotional skills for life.



The River School is a community of learning including students from Pre-Kindy to Year 6, teachers, administrators and parents. Founded in 1995, the school began with 23 students of mixed ages learning together. Located four kilometres from Maleny in the beautiful Queensland hinterland at the Sunshine Coast, the school is situated on 25 acres of land - 15 of which is rainforest and creek.

At school, teachers feel passionate about guiding young people to acquire skills that encourage them to question and extend their growth mindsets. Also, to be peacemakers who understand the connection and responsibility to themselves, others, animals and the environment.

The River School is part of a global Neohumanist Education movement which teaches love and respect for all humanity as well as all living and non-living beings. Their philosophy, Neohumanism, builds upon the Australian Curriculum enabling students to take their place as confident, global citizens.

Ms Anne Donoghoe, the school's Principal, explains that *"a Neohumanist education seeks to cultivate in children their already innate capacity for love and compassion. The goal is to expand a student's sense of community gradually, from self to family, locality, country, humanity, life on Earth and ultimately the entire universe."*

At school, kids are taught meditation and yoga to experience peace and connectedness; through play-based and excellent academic education they learn how to use their gifts to make a difference, and through the arts, they know how to express their creativity with joy.

"The child as the individual extending their love to family, then to community and understanding how that love becomes universal; individuals understand the meaning of connectedness with the world."

The philosophy has always focused on working on sustainability, acknowledging the interconnection of all life and the importance of living in balance with the natural systems and teaching students to be caretakers of the Earth.

The SSN Journal spoke to Alieta Belle, Arts & Cultural Teacher at The River School. Alieta is a passionate advocate for integrating creativity with learning and promoting quality Arts, Media and Environmental education for young people.

When asked about their interpretation of sustainability, Alieta explains that it is seen as the living balance on Earth, *“sustainability is about promoting to the children the importance of being a guardian of the Earth and students understanding that life and ecosystems on Earth depend on each other for survival. The Australian Curriculum’s Sustainability priority integrates well with the School’s view,”* she adds.

The school models sustainability by reducing, reusing and recycling in all areas of school life - from the vegetarian tuck shop, organic gardening, composting and mulching, rainwater collection and solar panels, to personal and social sustainability through enhancing inner peace, teaching moral values and training in relationship-building, leadership and service-oriented programmes.

For the past 10 years, the Year 5 students have participated in the annual Sunshine Coast Council ‘Kids in Action’ program, attending conferences aimed to learn about environmental issues.

In 2019, The River School students developed the video titled ‘Connecting to Country – Celebrating Nature’s Icons’, where they learned about the importance of local endangered animals in the ecosystem and the interconnection of the trees and waterways to the survival of these species. In the video, the students showcased their learning progression over three terms. This arts-based inquiry lead the students on a journey down the river and back again as they learnt about local endangered animals iconic to the region, engaged with Jinibara custodians and explored arts processes as a way of embedding their learning and expressing their connection to the local environment.

In 2021, the River School is preparing for an exciting year. They have designated 2021 as the **Year of Curiosity** and will use the lens of wonder to move forward from the challenges and opportunities presented in 2020. The school has also initiated a paper recycling system and are looking forward to reducing the school’s carbon emissions. The Year 6 students and teacher will lead this project by using the audit tool promoted by Craig Reucassel’s ‘Fight for Planet A: Our Climate Challenge.’ The River School will also be writing a whole school Climate Science curriculum for P-6.

The SSN wish your school the best of luck with these big plans and look forward to hearing the results!



EVENTS CALENDAR

november

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

5: SSN Networking
Night, Outdoor
Classrooms Day

9-15: National Recycling
Week

12: SSN Member School
Meeting; WRIQ Future
Leaders Launch

december

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

5: World Soil Day

10: Human rights day

11: SSN office closure

25: Merry Christmas

31: New Years Eve: Last
day 2020

Introducing

Carmelo Fedele

Carmelo Fedele is the recently appointed Head of Sustainability, an inaugural position at International Grammar School in Sydney. Following a career as an accountant, Carmelo used his joint passions of learning about the world and guiding the learning of young people to teach Geography and Commerce. A teacher of over 11 years, Carmelo is excited to use his new position to develop the sustainable practices and culture of International Grammar School.

After some years practicing as an accountant, Carmelo realised he missed engaging with people and felt he was only spending an increasing amount of time in front of the computer. Therefore, intending to change his career path, he went back to university to pursue a teaching degree. *"I have never been more motivated. I found all my courses interesting and meaningful. I chose to focus on geography, and the more I learned about the world, about the human interaction with our world, the more I felt inspired,"* says Carmelo.

Back then, 'An Inconvenient Truth' by Nobel Peace winner Al Gore was making waves and impacting audiences around the world. The film raised public opinion and awareness of climate change, and Carmelo found yet more inspiration to pursue his goal of becoming a teacher. Years later, he became a Geography teacher. Carmelo quickly realised the significance of sustainability and the need to embed it in education.

This became even more important when he saw how passionate his students were about the topic!!!

When asked about the meaning of sustainability, Carmelo immediately thinks of the definition provided in 1987 by the **Brundtland Report**: *"the ability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."*

Nevertheless, he adds - *"It's a pretty anthropocentric definition. I would argue that sustainability should incorporate the intrinsic value of the biophysical world, beyond its usefulness to humans. It should seek to sustain biodiversity and allow natural processes to proceed. Perhaps it's a bit idealistic, but I consider a sustainable future to be one where people live in harmony with nature, rather than in competition with it,"* he says.

After eleven years of teaching, Carmelo is now the Head of Sustainability at the International Grammar School (IGS), a unique, independent, coeducational, secular school located in Sydney, NSW.

With values that reflect a charter of diversity, individual and social responsibility and respect for self and others, IGS is committed to a sustainable future.



The School is enacting its first sustainability framework, 'Into the World 2016-2020', one of the three strategic aspirations of the IGS strategic plan, along with limitless learning and empowered students.

"In schools, passion, people, and persistence are my keys to overcoming the challenges of promoting sustainability."

For IGS, sustainability is a core value. However, in the context of the school environment, it can be difficult to challenge processes and routines that may have been in place for many years. As an example, something as simple as digitising assessment notifications to save paper can be tricky – Carmelo explains that, *"the student-led 'Sustainable Futures' group wrote a proposal to make this change. They calculated that our school was using 76,800 pages each year, just on assessment notifications; the equivalent of approximately four trees per year. It was difficult to propose a change."*

While discussing the difficulties of wanting to inspire change, Carmelo's approach is trying to connect with people emotionally, as well as rationally.

He gives the example of Dr Rebecca Huntley, who in her book 'How to Talk About Climate Change,' argues that the way to make progress on climate change action is to understand the psychology of human attitudes, emotions and our ability to change.

During his tenure as a teacher, Carmelo has participated in many projects. One of his favourite ones was in 2018 when a student-led initiative inspired the IGS community to purchase an Energy Monitoring System (EMS) so that efforts to reduce their energy footprint could be measured and improved upon every day.

Hunter Forbes, a Year 12 student, researched the School's green print for his senior Geography major work, creating an action plan for changing energy use for the better. With the support of Carmelo, Hunter and Will Salkeld – another Year 12 student – established a Sustainable Futures Club and raised \$4,000 to purchase a Provecta Energy Monitoring System (EMS).

The Sustainable Futures Club and Carmelo worked on diverse projects, fundraising, developing campaigns and organising events, focusing on the goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. *"I am fortunate to work in a school that has sustainability as a core value and is innovative enough to create a position such as mine,"* he says.

We have asked Carmelo, what would he say to students interested in sustainability? He says:

"If you're on the same journey in your school, you don't have to 'geek out' about it as much as me, but enthusiasm is contagious, and it will attract the right people to your cause. Getting the right people on board is crucial, you can't do it all by yourself, and you want to take as many people in your community on the journey with you. Finally, persistence is crucial if you're going to overcome the many roadblocks that will inevitably arise."

On 30th October 2020, we celebrate the World Teacher's Day. The SSN would like to thank all the teachers who inspire students on a daily basis to become the best version of themselves. It is because of you that the kids of the future are finding more ways to engage the world around them. To all the teachers making a difference, we are with you; we support you, we appreciate you. Thank you for all you do!



STEM Workshop

Energy Monitoring



CODING & IOT

Use Coding and IOT (Internet of Things) in Energy Monitoring.



PROBLEM SOLVING

Work as a team to find solutions to real-world problems.



APP DESIGN

Create Apps for data analysis and energy monitoring.

Program Outline

In this immersive STEM workshop the students will learn about smart energy monitoring and learn how to code IOT devices and build Apps.

The students will combine their skills to make a Smart Energy Monitoring System.

All programs are developed and delivered by teachers with content linked to the Achievement Standards of the Australian Curriculum for Digital Technologies, and Design and Technology.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand energy usage at home.
- Write and test code using Visual Block Coding or Syntax Coding.
- Use of STEM Tools including Coding, Internet of Things (IOT), and Sensors to design and create a Smart Energy Monitoring System.
- Collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Zara Malloy



Determined to do her part to help the planet, Year 6 student Zara understands sustainability as our ability to make an effort to look after our environment by lowering the amount of fossil fuels used and reducing the waste we produce by preserving and taking care of our natural environment, our trees, land and ocean.

Zara is a Year 6 student at St Francis Xavier Primary School at Runaway Bay on the Gold Coast. She lives with her mum, dad, brother Lincoln and her dog Skippy. Passionate about conservation and sustainability, Zara has a genuine love for the environment.

In 2017 she had the opportunity to travel around Australia for ten months with her family living in a camper trailer where she learned a lot about the land, the country and how precious the environment is. They spent a lot of time travelling along the coastline of Australia, where Zara fell in love with the marine life that lives off our shores, especially turtles! She also got a taste of distance education doing all of her schooling on the road, which she loved.

Zara started working on sustainability at a very young age inspired by her own love for nature and her family, especially by her mum Kelly, who is passionate about conservation and the environment.

Growing up, Zara remembers becoming more observant, *"I realised that nearly everything we do has some sort of effect on the environment. Even when I was just playing on the oval at school or sitting down at lunchtime in our school grounds, I noticed there was always plastic, rubbish and waste around, everywhere,"* she says.

She became more involved with sustainability in her school and feeling inspired, she put her name down for the Year 6 Sustainability Committee. In her second term and wanting to make a more significant change, she nominated herself as the leader of the Sustainability Committee.

"Being part of the Committee, I was able to start and help run waste-reducing projects at our school, including the Nude Food Month, recycling cans and bottles, the Bread Tag Competition and our plant store. I also spoke at school assembly about the environment and got the chance to be a part of the school Green Team last year participating in the School Sustainability Awards. Our school won first place, which was amazing!" Zara shares proudly.



As the Leader of the Year 6 Sustainability Committee, Zara was part of a project that to this day is one of her favourites, the **'Bread Tag Collection Competition.'** The challenge was an enjoyable experience for the whole school. Each class was given a container to collect their bread tags, and each student would bring their bread tags from home and place them in a special box. After two weeks, the Sustainability Committee would go around the school, collect the bread tags and give them to the teacher, Mrs Stewart, to weigh.

At the end of the term, one class from each grade would win a prize for the most bread tags in their year level. Over 60,000 bread tags were donated to a company that recycles them and builds wheelchairs with the proceedings for less fortunate people in Africa. *"This would be my favourite project because it not only helps people in Africa, but recycles, and puts the bread tags to a good purpose!"* says Zara.

Other projects include a new native Bee and Butterfly Garden, encouraging recycling for the Containers for Change program and also spreading awareness of protecting the local koalas that live around her area.

When engaging in sustainability, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the state of our world.

However, Zara tries to keep positive, setting herself goals and following people that are passionate about doing something for the environment and our planet.

When we asked her if it has been easy, she says, *"I started getting annoyed by the people who couldn't care less about our environment. But then, I started watching a girl called Greta Thunberg. I watched her get told by many people how she was too young, or she wasn't experienced enough. I look up to her. Sometimes I would start thinking to myself, what if I can't make a change? What if I am not good enough? This wasn't exactly a challenge, but a reason why I should keep trying to make a change."*

Another challenge for Zara, was realising about the damage humans have done to the world. She admits that sometimes while watching documentaries about the state of the environment, seeing the photos of turtles with straws stuck in their noses, and baby birds tangled in plastic bags, it becomes too much. *"I can't keep watching this happen to innocent animals and do nothing about it."*

"I want to keep learning about the environment and keep trying to inform others and help our school Sustainability Committee look after not only our school but our community."

Zara is looking forward to continuing with helping the environment. Recently, she is focusing on learning about the koala conservation efforts and looking for local wildlife. She is hoping to volunteer with koala conservation groups and is excited about continuing her work with her school's Sustainability Committee.

Thank you for your commitment to making this a better world Zara, there is no doubt that you are already making a difference!

GREEN INNOVATION AWARDS

PLANNING AHEAD 2021



The Green Innovation Awards is an innovative science and environmental competition available for primary and high schools from the Gold Coast to Grafton. Students are asked to demonstrate their innovative ideas in waste management, water management, building and packaging materials, agriculture, biofuels and renewable energy.

The competition taps in to STEM subjects and is designed to meet curriculum outcomes.

PLANNING UNITS OF WORK FOR NEXT YEAR THAT ALIGN WITH THE GREEN INNOVATION AWARDS?

Here's the 2021 Green Innovation Awards timeline to help you prepare:

TERM 1

- DECIDE ON YOUR INNOVATIVE IDEA
- **REGISTER & CHOOSE YOUR MENTOR**
(2 MINUTE ON-LINE REGISTRATION)
- PLAN & DESIGN YOUR IDEA
- HAVE A MENTOR VISIT YOUR SCHOOL

TERM 2

- HAVE A MENTOR VISIT YOUR SCHOOL
- ENTERPRISE LAB DAY AT SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY (MID TERM)
- REFINE YOUR IDEA & EMAIL YOUR ENTRY
ENTRIES DUE (END TERM)

TERM 3

- FINALS EVENT (MID TERM)
SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY, LISMORE

www.greeninnovationawards.com.au



Australian Government

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University**





Container Exchange

Container Exchange (COEX) is the not-for-profit organisation created to establish and run the Containers for Change scheme in Queensland. Its focus is three-fold: reduce beverage container litter, increase recycling efforts and help the community to benefit through charities, community groups and not-for-profit organisations participating in the scheme.

The Containers for Change scheme commenced in Queensland on the 1st November 2018 to tackle the high level of beverage container litter and low recycling rates. Their goal is to keep Queensland beautiful by building a world class beverage container refund scheme, delivering the highest collection at the lowest cost and encouraging Queenslanders to exchange drink containers for a 10 cent refund whilst upholding scheme integrity.

Queensland is the fifth Australian state or territory, following the Northern Territory, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, to adopt a container refund scheme, following the lead of South Australia, whose container refund scheme commenced operating in 1977.

The key participants involved in the scheme include the Department of Environment and Science, the product responsibility organisation represented by COEX, owners of container refund points, logistic providers, processors, material recovery facilities, recyclers, beverage manufacturers and members of the public.

The SSN spoke to COEX's General Manager – Corporate and Community Relations Glenda Viner, about the scheme and the organisation's role in Queensland. Ms Viner explains that COEX sees sustainability as one of its core values, and this is applied to the business as a whole. It is not viewed as a purely environmental measure.



For COEX, sustainability is about working with their network of operators to improve access across the state, *“We educate the community on how they can engage with and benefit from the scheme and this in turn drives container volumes to our container refund points, growing local businesses and providing jobs,”* says Ms Viner.

As well as providing environmental benefits as a result of recycling – so far in Queensland COEX has had a positive impact on people and communities all over the state with 21 social enterprises operating within the scheme, 75 independent operators, 269,771 customers registered with scheme IDs including individuals, charities, community groups and businesses and \$2.4m returned to community groups and charities.

Ms Viner shares, *“To the end of October 2020, more than 2.3 billion containers have been returned through the container refund points with more coming to COEX via kerbside recycling services. This has meant \$230 million has been paid back to customers, charities and community groups. The scheme has created 700 jobs across Queensland and since launched we have seen a 54% reduction in beverage container litter in parks, waterways and bushland.”*

While achieving numerous targets, COEX has found certain challenges, one of them being the geographic size of Queensland, making it difficult to provide access to as many people as possible, particularly in rural and remote areas.

“We have worked to expand our network, improving capacity and accessibility to provide more customers with a better refund experience. We also work collaboratively with communities, councils and operators to identify gaps and develop solutions for the unique environments we work in,” says Ms Viner.

One particular success story is the way COEX has worked with communities and one of their operators to provide service to Cape York, one of Australia’s most remote communities. This service brought recycling to 22 communities for the first time and significantly reduced beverage container litter in these pristine environments.

COEX is looking forward to seeing the results from their partnership with not-for-profit Plastic Oceans Australasia, with whom they devised The Wave of Change Program. This project gave up to 50 Queensland schools access to Plastic Ocean’s curriculum mapped educational resources at no charge. Ms Viner explains, *“We worked to customise these resources to include how students could use the Containers for Change scheme to recycle single use beverage containers that they used at home and at school. Schools were incentivised to use the resources and participate in the scheme with virtual reality headset kits up for grabs as prizes for each age group. We have students as far afield as Thursday Island taking part which is a fantastic result.”*

“Container Exchange will be striving to meet the strategic targets set by the Queensland Government, including an 85% container collection rate by 2022 and an 80% public awareness increase. We will need the support of communities across Queensland to achieve this and schools are a big part of our plan.”

If you are interested in donating containers, please do using the SSN ID: **C102 175 43**

Introducing

Louise Bahnson



Born in Denmark to a family of dairy farmers, Louise moved to Australia at six years of age. Growing up on the farm, she remembers the beauty of the land, her bare feet on the ground while gathering fresh apples and playing around her mum's thriving veggie garden. Now, a mother of two beautiful young women, Louise works with her husband in their Theatre Company, Goat Track Theatre where she teaches drama. She is also a business owner dedicated to sharing her love for urban farming through her company, Little Green Patch.

Louise has been working in urban farming most of her life. Her learning commenced from birth on her father's dairy farm, where she developed a deep love for the land and their animals. Inspired by her father, Louise learned to respect the land and appreciate nature; she got her expertise in vegetable gardening and cooking from her mum – a great gardener. Her parents had a significant impact on her life, teaching her to live in harmony with nature, growing their food, caring for their produce and minimising their waste.

Sustainability for Louise is the ability to continually be able to exist with what is at your disposal in such a way that we don't compromise future generations or the future ecosystem. As a teacher, and most importantly, as a parent, she understands the significance of Education for Sustainability. She believes there is still much more to do to help the planet heal.

She explains: *"Sustainability, ten to twenty years ago was linked with permaculture and living a sustainable life where we could gain what we needed from our natural environment. We've damaged the environment and our natural ecosystem so much that in fact, I think we need to look at regenerating the environment; nursing it back to health. This might mean taking a lot less for a while to replenish and recreate a thriving ecosystem."*

Louise's inspiration to work with sustainability came when she discovered the importance of taking better care of the soil. 'Dirt to Soil' by Gabe Brown, 'The Call of the Reed Warbler' by Charles

Massey and 'Kiss the Ground' by Josh Tickle, were some of the books that changed the way she perceived her role in creating a better planet. *"I saw it as my responsibility – if I was going to be a steward of the land I occupied, it was my responsibility to take care of it and regenerate the topsoil,"* she says.

Louise understands her responsibility to give her children the skills and tools to live a healthy and meaningful life.

PARENT FEATURE

Her two daughters are committed to taking care of their environment, having learnt to be sustainable from a young age, and they also understand the significance of expressing gratitude.

"Ultimately, being a parent is about teaching your children to make a connection with something meaningful and to be able to share that with them is truly something."

Louise and her husband, Andrew did their best to teach them that there is an action-reaction to everything in life. Her daughters attended the Queensland Academy of Creative Industries (QACI) in Kelvin Grove, Brisbane where they studied Arts and pursued an International Baccalaureate.

As a teacher, Louise focuses on a creative learning process with less focus on the outcomes and the limits established by the education system structure. She explains: *"There are so many small gold pieces of learning that are important, that can stay with them. I am not suggesting that other subjects like Maths and English are not important. Still, there are ways of teaching in a more grounded, realistic and meaningful way,"* she continues, *"For example, with my education background I can teach a composting module, and I can manage to bring in concepts of maths, science, nutrition and health, plus music and literacy. We can teach more creatively if we just forget about the outcomes-based model of education."*

Learning about the many environmental challenges we face was very difficult for Louise. For some time, she was convinced there was nothing else to do. However, she became aware of how important it was to make changes herself, *"Being a steward of my little block of land, and the people in it, and whatever I do within my block of land, that has to be meaningful. I am not responsible for what other people are doing. I focused on what I was doing, and that made me feel more positive and hopeful."* It dawned on her that in fact, she had the tools to invite others to embark on the sustainability journey with her.



She began blogging and posting about her gardening, sharing what she had learned and helping others learn, and she hasn't stopped since.

"We are facing new challenges - things like regenerating the land that you live on is not a skill being taught at school - then it becomes the responsibility of communities and parents to teach their kids about it."

Louise is excited about the future. She has plans to collaborate with a group of teachers in the education sector to create composting and farming workshops for schools. She is also working on her business project, Little Green Patch, where she helps people learn about how regenerative farming practices applied on a small scale can increase soil health.



Offering workshops and courses focused on teaching about composting, seasonal eating and planting, her vision for the future is to see small, chemical-free suburban backyards where people grow their food. Louise is also busy working on a book that she hopes to release sometime next year.

For more about Louise and her wonderful gardening, go to: <https://www.littlegreenpatch.net/>



MAKING CHANGE FOR GOOD

**2.93+ BILLION
CONTAINERS**

RETURNED
ACROSS THE
SCHEME*†

**4.3 MILLION
CONTAINERS**

RECOVERED
PER DAY,
ON AVERAGE*†

**\$227+
MILLION**

IN REFUNDS
BACK TO
QUEENSLANDERS**

**54%
DECREASE**

CONTAINER
LITTER IN OUR
ENVIRONMENT

**700+
NEW JOBS**

CREATED FOR
QUEENSLANDERS

Change is best when it's shared. Shared with charities, clubs and school kids. Shared with locally owned businesses and their employees. Queensland's container refund scheme Containers for Change is designed to ensure the positive impacts of recycling are shared across our state.

To find your nearest container refund point and start making change, visit containersforchange.com.au/qld/where-to-return



*Figures from 1 November 2018 to 30 September 2020.

†Container refund points and material recovery facility volumes combined.

**Through the container refund point network.

The Sustainable Schools Network
aim to educate and connect
school communities to imagine
a sustainable future.



Sustainable
SCHOOLS NETWORK
reimagining education

