

SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS NETWORK JOURNAL



2019 Sustainability Symposium
School Sustainability Awards
Marsden State High School
Kalindi Brennan
Solar Schools
Patrick Brabant



Sustainable
SCHOOLS NETWORK

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EVENT CALENDAR

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Cover courtesy of Kalindi Brennan

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JULY

25th - Networking Night @ Currumbin RSL
Supported by Tugun Bendigo Bank

OCTOBER

29 October - Regional Sustainability Summit,
Townsville

NOVEMBER

7th - Networking Night @ Currumbin RSL
Supported by Tugun Bendigo Bank

SAVE THE DATE

APRIL 2020

28th - 2020 Sustainability Symposium

SSN MEMBERSHIP NOW AVAILABLE

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NETWORKING EVENT

CURRUMBIN RSL

JULY 25 | 7:00-9:00 PM

Tugun **Community Bank®**
Branch

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**CURRUMBIN
RSL**



2019 SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM

The Sustainable Schools Network Limited (SSN), in partnership with Somerset College and the City of Gold Coast, delivered the inaugural 2019 Sustainability Symposium on 13 May 2019. Identified as an ambitious undertaking, the event was coordinated after just seven months of the SSN commencing. Building partnerships and highlighting the need for sustainability education to become a mainstream concept were the main aims for the event.

Almost 600 individuals received the message that the youth of today are inspired and empowered! The participants were from 44 organisations and 39 schools, coordinated by 36 volunteers. With NAPLAN testing on the following day (excluding some schools), the attendance rate was still incredibly positive. The keynote speaker Melati Wijzen and other youth presenters Molly Steer, Kareem El-Ansary (the current Australian United Nations Youth Representative) and local Holley Sommerville Knott, stimulated and motivated students and teachers to return to their schools as change agents.



- building capacity in schools, youth, teachers, administrators, grounds keepers, and local organisations enthused to work with schools to ensure a sustainable future for our children.

SAVE THE DATE: 2020 Sustainability Symposium will be on Tuesday 28th April 2020 at All Saints Anglican School.

Pictured top left: Erin Merrin, Melati Wijzen, Kareem El-Ansary, Holley Sommerville Knott, Rob Hales, Amelia Berner & Katie Norman; below right: water efficiency and irrigation workshop; below: Patrick Brabant addressing day session participants.

Key highlights were:

- the panel discussion during the evening event;
- the Year 6 student delivering the personalised acknowledgement to country in local dialect Yugambeh;
- the ice breaking laughter in the Great Hall in the morning;
- students, teachers and local NFP organisations engaging;
- the 90% sustainable meal by Mudjira Village Eatery;
- the removal of boundaries between states, schools, ages;





An initiative of the Sustainable Schools Network and Gecko Environment Council, the 2019 School Sustainability Awards showcased eight Gold Coast sustainability leaders on the 8th of June 2019. Finalists were chosen based on their creativity and ambition and followed up with delivery of inspiring presentations during the award ceremony.

Thank you to our judges: Anna Itkonen (Awards Co-Founder), Cam Mackenzie (Principal Amaroo Environmental Education Centre), and Chelli Easson (SSN Strategic Director).

Entries opened to the 2019 Gold Coast School Sustainability Awards in April 2019. Schools were encouraged to enter this new initiative for a chance to win \$1000 for their school. Primary and secondary school categories were offered this valuable prize, in addition to a class excursion to Tangalooma Island Resort for the People's Choice Award. The judges had a difficult task to choose the finalists and were further challenged to identify the champions.



In the primary category the audience was inspired by All Saints Anglican School, Tallebudgera State School, Southport State School, Somerset College and St. Francis Xavier Catholic School. Currumbin Community Special School, Robina State High School and Silkwood School demonstrated their exceptional sustainability projects in the secondary category. We thank Regen Australia, Tangalooma Island Resort and City of Gold Coast for their generous sponsorship, as well as Assistant Minister Meaghan Scanlon and Councillors Daphne Macdonald and Glenn Tozer for their attendance and participation.



People's Choice winner: Robina State High School.



Secondary Category winner: Currumbin Community Special School.



Primary Category winner: St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School.





MARSDEN STATE HIGH SCHOOL

'Daring to inspire' and challenging their school community to 'make a difference', Marsden State High School has committed to a sustainability vision most can only dream of. Operating since 1987 this public high school has a balanced approach to provide quality education and leadership.

Focused on recycling, Marsden State High School (MSHS) committed to a sustainability journey in 2012. Commencing as the first school in the region to implement a compactor waste system; socially this prevented injury - environmentally this resulted in 0% recycling. The next steps were a two-bin system to recycle cardboard in classrooms and aiming for litter-free school grounds. Yellow-lid bins were implemented in school grounds to meet universal recycling standards. Like most schools, contamination was a real issue! Although students tried to put only recyclable items in the recycling bin, inevitably non-recyclables and food products would end up in the yellow-lid bin. So MSHS called in the "Waste Negotiators"...

The key learning outcome from the 'Waste Negotiators' was the school was paying too much for waste disposal. Contaminated bins, compactor hire fees, skip bins full of recycled material, all contributed to a costly system. This 'ah ha' moment lead MSHS to develop a vision regarding school resource management that has resulted in significant operational improvements. The vision focused on economic and environmental aspects of sustainability: reduce financial and environmental impacts of school waste management.



In addition to a money-saving, earth protecting vision, MSHS also aimed to:

- create a teachable system to share with other schools;
- become a recognisable sustainability leader;
- eradicate recycling contamination; and,
- create a student-led recycling program.

The 'messy' work began with the removal of the compactor and the implementation of a lift system to empty bin contents onto a sorting table. As news spread students joined in the waste reduction and sorting tasks. The end result is non-contaminated co-mingling bins, a sustainability centre and:

- **an 85% reduction in waste to landfill!!!**

MSHS now receives remuneration for their waste through the following streams:

- clean white paper is like 'white gold';
- scrap metal is another valuable resource;
- and of course the 'containers for change program' pays 10c for every bottle collected on school premises.

Schools and community members are invited to visit Marsden State High School for inspiration and practical advice regarding resource recovery and management. The school's motto to 'make a difference' has indeed been achieved.



Introducing

KALINDI BRENNAN

*Real World Learning Coordinator at Silkwood
School and Youth Ambassador Mentor*

Admiring her late Grandmother's love of bushwalking and wonderment of natural places, Kalindi Brennan has had a passion for nature and environmental conservation for as long as she can remember.

Inspired by Silkwood's founding teacher and dear friend Atilio Dona, Kalindi has been integrating sustainability and environmental education into her practice for 18 years. Kalindi was captivated to learn more about the native habitats accessible on Silkwood school grounds. Rallying up students to support restoration projects, Kalindi has been instrumental in creating interactive bush trails and the now 20 acres of 'Bush Interaction for Learning' native habitats.

In late 2011 Kalindi bravely commenced a Master of Environment - Education for Sustainability program whilst working full-time. Concluding at the end of 2012, she recognises:

"The research undertaken and knowledge gained were invaluable. I was able to get to the core of my ecological identity and consider deeply how this could be embedded into my teaching and learning practice."

Work in her school community focusses on inspiring change and enabling students. Sustainability is identified as:

"Merging your purpose, passion, skills and actions with the needs of the world. It is working together, to make a positive and lasting impact. Sustainability encompasses social, cultural, economic, political and environmental drivers working in circular, cyclical and interconnected ways to create a healthy, balanced and harmonious world where all life can exist."

The mindset of "we're all in it together" has been adopted which ensures a centrality of student ownership, as well as inquiry and project-based learning experiences. Even writing this article, Kalindi offered to showcase her students as this is her natural teaching position.

First Nations People are also at the heart of sustainability practices, with support given to Silkwood School by local community mentors and being a partner school with Yugambeh Museum for 6 years. In her words,

"Where better to look than to our First Nations people who belong to the oldest, longest continuing culture in the world? As such, indigenous cultural integration informs much of what I do in sustainability and environmental education contexts."

Challenges faced are competing school priorities, bureaucratic processes and governance, funding limitations, time and space for longitudinal projects, and to an extent, a wider apathy in Australian society regarding the seriousness of the environmental challenges young people face. With optimism, barriers are addressed through;

"Thinking big and acting quickly, working creatively, engaging collaboratively in partnerships for greater impact and extending influence in the wider community, seeking advice from mentors on a regular basis and continuing to work directly with young people to ensure that what they're connecting with is real, relevant, relational and responsive to their needs and interests."

Kalindi believes that in order to protect and sustain the environment, people have to connect with it in physical and emotional ways. The respect and intuition our traditional owners have for the land and the interconnectedness of all elements is a constant source of inspiration.

Working with high school students to develop a whole school 'Connecting to Country through Totems' learning program is one of Kalindi's favourite projects. It is based on current research on Pedagogy of Place, Aboriginal Ways of Learning and Kids Teaching Kids methodology.



Passionate about integrated, cross-curricular and experiential learning where sustainability and environmental education drivers are woven into learning programs with emphasis on student input, initiative and individual/group interest Kalindi Brennan is an inspiring and leading Gold Coast teacher. Kalindi seeks to generate curiosity, enjoyment, and enthusiasm for learning and regularly utilises the Kids Teaching Kids pedagogy as a powerful way to empower young people to connect with sustainability themes.

SOLAR SCHOOLS

Solar Schools founder Rob Breuer is leading the way, inspiring sustainability through energy education in schools.



The Solar Schools program originated in 2002, when founders Rob Breuer and Mark Stenhouse began designing the technology to capture and analyse energy data from solar panels. In the years since, Rob and Mark have remained committed to this important technology, continuing to grow and refine capabilities of their system and educational program.

Rob defines sustainability as *"living a life in balance with the ecosystem that provides for life"*. He is influenced by immersion in rock-climbing culture where *"leaving only footprints"* is the aim. Solar Schools focuses on energy – one of the biggest emitters of Co2 today - with tools to educate on renewable energy and energy efficiency. Rob warns, *"You can't make a sustainable system if you have never ending growth of energy consumption"*.

Rob outlines some of the very real challenges sustainability practitioners face today: *"Leadership, funding and fracturing of effort."* Sustainability is generally left to the dedicated individual within the school environment despite significant scientific evidence of the existential crisis that we are facing. He highlights, *"There is still a lack of governance leadership, commercial leadership and leadership within schools"*.

Funding is a challenge to implementing meaningful, action-orientated programs including Solar Schools. *"Unfortunately, our program incurs significant cost, mainly in metering, data and development of educational content. Governments and schools are generally unwilling to cover those costs, even when there is evidence that education in this area is required, identified as the fastest way to reduce energy consumption, and savings can be made"*, he reports.

In what Rob identifies as a, "*fracturing of effort*" he highlights the lack of centralised place or system for teachers and schools to get consistent accurate knowledge, programs and resources for their schools. Also the level of a teachers knowledge or willingness to learn can be a barrier to quality sustainability education. A commitment to a sustainable future drives Rob and Mark to continue their important work.

One Solar Schools program subscriber reported:

"During the month of May we reduced our electricity by \$74.96 a DAY. Saving \$2,248.80 for the month! Not only that, think of the CO2 emission avoided. We did this just by turning off appliances that weren't needed and changing our behaviours. That is even including more air cons we had installed and a new computer lab that runs 30 desktop computers." Amy, Toowoomba East State School

QLD State Schools Solar Energy Data in 2018

Solar generated: 6,183MWH CO2e Avoided: 5,311.4T

Solar exported: 304.9MWH

(This is likely an underestimation due to new solar installs not yet measured.)

What this equates to:

- the solar energy generated is equivalent to the energy stored in 27,999,753 Krispy Kreme glazed donuts or roughly 759.5 tonnes of coal.

With that energy you could:

- drive 11,747,616km in an average car (based on 5.8l/100km) or power 927 typical 4 person households in Brisbane for 1 year

The 5,311.4t of co2e avoided would:

- fill 993 hot air balloons
- be the same as the co2 sequestered from growing 243,979 trees for 1 year
- equate to the co2 emissions from 26,557,125,000 google searches which is roughly 4.74 days of global google

You can tell from this data Rob (pictured left) is one energy guru!

Watching schools adopt the Planet Watch app and resources combined with stories of improved energy efficiency is what drives Solar Schools to innovate for the future. Gamification of solar data in this technological era engages students on their level. Enhancing the Planet Watch app and creating the Engine Room are two examples of their future work. A weather station kit is in developmental stages and aims for schools to capture weather related energy data to create higher level resources in the STEM areas.



Solar Schools are also working with their partner Wattwatchers to create a school and household data program due to launch later this year with funding support for schools. Tech-savvy and innovative, Solar Schools is a powerhouse in Queensland.



PATRICK BRABANT

Youth perspective

A dedicated, leading Sustainable Schools Network Youth Ambassador, Patrick Brabant inspires others with his passion for environmental sustainability. From a tender age Patrick has been fascinated by nature, all its creatures and how he can protect them. Completing the inaugural Outward Bound Australia/Tweed Council Environmental Leadership Training, Patrick has used his experience to work with schools on sustainability initiatives like recycling, composting and nude food lunches. Patrick is also one of the ambassadors for the NaturallyGC program.



Patrick currently attends Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School at Terranora whilst living on the Gold Coast. This young change agent is not bound by borders. Understanding the concept of sustainability to mean, *"Living in harmony with something... Another part of it is taking the initiative to lighten the footprint that we are having as a species so there is a brighter tomorrow and a future to look forward to."* Patrick is future-focused and committed to taking action as part of his plan to make a difference.

A childhood fascination with saving dinosaurs, has lead Patrick to becoming the eco-warrior he is

today. Deciding to ensure animals don't become extinct like the dinosaurs he has since done everything in his power to make a difference to the planet as well as reduce not only his own but his families, friends and schools impact on the planet.

When asked recently about hobbies or interests, he replied, *"it's protecting the planet and animals"*. How many young people do you know who would answer that way? Driven and passionate, Patrick spends all of his spare time helping or leading local initiatives. He also has a part-time job working for Containers for Change.

Like any sustainability leader, Patrick is challenged by community attitudes and a lack of urgency. He stated, *"Everyone that has been involved in conservation and sustainability will tell you that there are challenges in this field. I have found that the greatest challenges that I have encountered are narrow-minded people and individuals that are not open to seeing the severity of the problem and that they can actually be a part of the solution."*

Believing in people power and individual contributions, Patrick is becoming patient recognising that *"change won't happen overnight"*. Patrick sees three organisations as sustainability champions reversing the damage done to our planet. The SSN share his passion for these organisations.

- Redcycle - an Australian soft plastic recycling service;
- OzHarvest - food rescue and education not-for-profit;
- Ecosia - a search engine using it's revenue to plant trees!

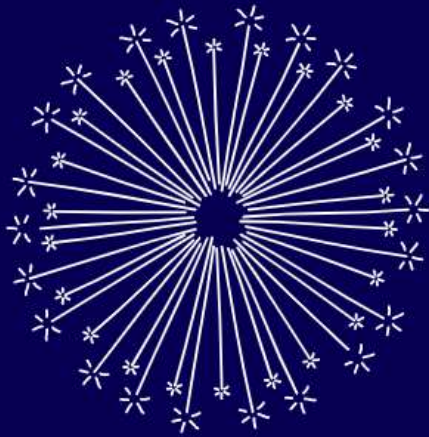
Our future is bright with Patrick leading the way. In his future he plans to:

"Work with my school to improve their sustainability. I will also continue to work with my local community on environmental projects and initiatives. After school, I will work in the conservation field and as long as I am making a difference to the planet I will have a purpose. This is what makes me happy."

"When I was eleven years old I launched my website patsendangeredanimals.com to help spread awareness about the plight of endangered species and what people can do to help save them. I hope my efforts inspire other people to take action for the planet."

Patrick Brabant, Year 11 student,
Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School





SAVE THE DATE

2020 SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM

**28 APRIL 2020
ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN SCHOOL**

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

**WE ARE LOOKING FOR SPONSORS AND CONTRIBUTORS
PLEASE EMAIL [INFO@SSN.ORG.AU](mailto:info@ssn.org.au) FOR MORE INFO**

The 2020 Sustainability Symposium aims to connect Northern Rivers and South East Queensland Schools in their commitment towards sustainability education. The four main objectives are: establishing a common language regarding sustainability, addressing the 16th sustainable development goal (peace, justice and strong institutions), youth empowerment and building partnerships for sustainable education within our local region. Students, teachers and school communities are invited to learn, share & develop 21st century skills such as collaboration, communication, responsible citizenship and critical thinking. Day session for students; trade show for business managers, grounds and maintenance staff; curriculum workshop series; parent workshops; and, networking dinner in the evening.

We are looking forward to igniting souls and inspiring change!