



Sustainable
SCHOOLS NETWORK

Strategic Plan

2020-2023

Prepared by the SSN Board



The Sustainable Schools Network acknowledge and pay respects to the Yugambeh, Koombumerrii and Bundjalung people, past, present and future, of the Gold Coast region. We also acknowledge the many Aboriginal people from other diverse regions as well as Torres Strait and South Sea Islander people who now live in the local area and have made an important contribution to our community.

The SSN understand the importance of the cross curriculum priority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture complementing that of sustainability. We recognise that the SSN's foundations on the Gold Coast is a special part of Yugambeh country. Our home headquarters in Tallebudgera are particularly vital places for bush food harvesting, hunting and fishing and we acknowledge that the word Tallebudgera is an aboriginal word meaning 'good fish'.

The SSN recognise the strong connections of Indigenous people to the country of their ancestors. We value all that Indigenous elders past, present and emerging have to teach us about how to live sustainably and we recognise Indigenous people are the true custodians of the land upon which we meet.



The idea

The Sustainable Schools Network Limited (SSN) was inspired by the vision of CEO and Steward Katie Norman, who was compelled to act after years of living overseas with intense air and water pollution. Initiating a sustainability committee at an independent Gold Coast school, Katie identified the benefits of partnering with other schools to share resources and strengthen commitments to education for sustainability. It was from this beginning that the SSN evolved.

To the SSN it makes sense to take local action on global environmental and social problems, engaging young people who are not only highly creative, but are the world's future thought leaders. It is our observation that the siloed educational system focused on outcomes with ever increasing complexity and pressure on performance across the sector from students to parents, staff and community members is unlikely to ensure the wellbeing and development of our collective communities.

Reimagining education is critical to the delivery of the Australian Curriculum, cross-curriculum priority sustainability. This curriculum is adopted by most Australian states and indicates sustainability is to be embedded across subject areas and focuses on three organising ideas:

- systems;
- world views; and,
- futures.

The SSN has formed to support whole school communities to reimagine education to embrace education for sustainability pedagogy and system approaches that enable the future global citizens the world needs now more than ever. The SSN is a registered Australian not-for-profit charity.



The vision

Reimagining education to the Sustainable Schools Network involves a vision to **educate** and **connect** school communities to **imagine** a sustainable future.

Three pillars form the foundation of our work and are interdependent:

- Educate - delivering education for sustainability in Australia and beyond.
- Connect - building partnerships for education for sustainability.
- Imagine - being future-focused and creating a syntropic enterprise.

EDUCATE

Education to the SSN is critical to ensuring the wellbeing and future of our children and generations to come. We deliver education by providing resources for school communities and facilitating professional development opportunities for whole school communities.

CONNECT

To ensure education for sustainability (EfS) is a mainstream practice, the SSN aim to increase participation by school in behavioural and cultural change programs. We also aim to build relationships that share resources and break down barriers for school engagement in EfS.

IMAGINE

As an organisation being future-focused is essential to ensuring we have integrity and can lead the way. The SSN will develop our syntropic architecture and commit to understanding EfS best practice.



The understanding

Sustainability Education is a creative, critical and adaptive paradigm that resiliently builds the capacity of social and ecological systems. A meta-analysis of the the research into Education for Sustainability (EfS) has resulted in the following understanding of the characteristics and themes involved in EfS:

- Education: EfS requires school communities to understand sustainability.
- Connection: Building relationships is fundamental.
- Imagining: Future thinking and visioning.
- Taking action: Authentic, real world experiences.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified 17 goals that are interconnected and have been identified as global challenges that require action. The goals include addressing poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice and UN member states agreed in 2015 to deliver on the 17 goals by 2030. The SSN have identified that SDG 17 is fundamental to our work and that we will align with other goals where the opportunity arises. Previous and future events align with: SDG 3: Good health and well being, SDG 4: Quality education, SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production, SDG 13: Climate action, SDG 14: Life below water, SDG 15: Life on land, SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions.



The projects

As a new Australian not-for-profit charity the SSN will work with our community of volunteers and stakeholders to deliver meaningful projects that both align with our strategic plan and ensure optimal outcomes for school communities.

The first strategic plan demonstrated the following four key deliverables are critical to ensuring our vision is realised over the next three years. These four activities educate, connect and imagine:

- Deliver an annual **Sustainability Symposium** that engages with the whole-school community and provides quality learning and networking opportunities (educate, connect, imagine).
- Engage with regional communities via **Sustainability Summits**, showcasing local leaders and providing professional development.
- Prepare ongoing, quality **SSN Journals** demonstrating how schools educate for sustainability.
- Provide an engaging and meaningful **Member School Program**, ensuring the SSN meet the demands of our community and share their knowledge.

The SSN will also undertake other activities over the next three years that build our capacity as an organisation (imagine), that build our relationships to imagine and education (connect), and that ensure schools access professional, informed and accessible learning experiences (educate).



The community

School communities are comprised of teachers, students, school administrators, grounds and maintenance staff and cleaners. They are supported by a range of individuals and entities including parents, tuck-shop conveners, state and local government, local community groups and other interested stakeholders such as universities, where students' future learning will be enhanced, and the business community who are future employers.

All of these stakeholders can contribute to and benefit from the work of the SSN.

The SSN Board continues to be responsible for ensuring the vision and purpose of the SSN and ongoing development of the organisation. Operationally, five teams will deliver this strategic plan stewarded by the CEO and includes:

- administration
- finance
- education
- connection and,
- school engagement.

Fortunately, the SSN are also supported by our five founding partners: Glowing Green Australia, Green Cauldron Farm, Eco Avengers, Natura Pacific and the Australian Association of Environmental Education.

Collaboration and shared momentum is vitally important to the success of the SSN and are at the heart of everything we do. Stakeholders and the collective action they bring are relied upon to help identify issues and develop solutions that will leave positive social, environmental and economic legacies.

SDG #17: Building Partnerships for the Goals is our foundation.



The impact

This strategic plan aims to educate and connect school communities and to be future-focused as the SSN reimagine education. Expected of a new not-for-profit, there is still much work to do to improve our organisational processes, including:

- securing funding for paid positions
- building our volunteer capacity
- trialling projects and,
- measuring impact.

The following key performance indicators have been identified as measures of success:

- Increase participation in event and programs in terms of the number of schools involved.
- Increase participation in our member schools measured by email open and click rates, number of member schools featured in our Journal and events and providing training to others.
- To improve connections with our community we expect to see increased social media engagement, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.
- Increased website traffic and reduced bounce rates will indicate our website is a resource school communities can access for information regarding education for sustainability. Further an annual survey will provide qualitative data about the resources provided by our program.
- Enhanced reader rates of the SSN Journal and entries to the 'letter to the editor' column. Further, an annual survey will identify the impact the SSN Journal has on our community.
- Strengthen partnerships for the goals the SSN will continue to offer community partners opportunities and create groups (e.g Higher Education Advisory Group) as needed.



For more information

We would love to hear from you

info@ssn.org.au

www.ssn.org.au



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