



# CONNECTING REGIONAL QUEENSLAND Sustainable Schools Summit



## ***2020 EVENT REVIEW***



**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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# #FightForPlanetA

Sustainable Schools Network Limited  
*reimagining education*

The Sustainable Schools Network (SSN) aims to build meaningful partnerships between schools and their communities regarding sustainability. Sustainability is a dynamic paradigm requiring on-going, collective commitments to innovation and change that is respectful of the human and environmental diversity that our planet depends upon. Our vision is to educate and connect school communities to imagine a sustainable future.

Contact us

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## Event Partners

This event was a partnership between the Sustainable Schools Network Limited and:

- Glowing Green Australia
- Solar Schools
- Australian Association of Environmental Education (QLD Chapter)
- Reef Guardian Schools Program
- Kids Teaching Kids.

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# Event Summary

## #FightForPlanetA

On the **19th of October 2020**, the SSN delivered the Connecting Regional Queensland: Sustainable Schools Summit online from St Patrick's College Townsville. This event aimed to:

- showcase leading local schools including Reef Guardian Schools
- empower youth leadership by implementing the Kids Teaching Kids model
- deliver education for sustainability professional development for the whole school community
- enable regional connectivity
- raise awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The event program was built around three key elements:

- keynote plenary to engage and inspire
- workshops to improve understanding and skills for specific populations within schools
- school showcase to learn more from regional schools and motivate schools to commence and/or develop their programs.

The keynote speakers included Craig Reucassel from ABC's Fight for Planet A: Our Climate Challenge, Holley Somerville Knott from Tell Someone Who Cares, and Garrett Swearingen from Australian Youth Climate Coalition.



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# Event Summary

## #FightForPlanetA

According to the event survey, only 50% of participants had heard of the Sustainable Development Goals before the event. Therefore, activities like these remain important in regional areas as they offers exposure to a global sustainability framework and opportunities to contextualise programs as contributing to action beyond local areas.

Participating were an estimated 200 people from 34 schools and 24 organisations. In total, 23 presenters were involved; approximately half were young people empowered to share their sustainability experiences.

Financially, the event costs were covered via sponsorships, a grant and ticket sales. This enabled the event to be marketed to over 21696 people on social media in the Townsville and Cairns regions.

Significant media exposure was attained most likely due to the high profile of Craig Reucassel. The event was featured in print, television and radio media in the north and far north region.

Most importantly the event developed relationships and connected participants to both new knowledge and organisations that can support ongoing change.

*"We're not alone in this. There are lots of resources and change is a lifetime of action."*

Survey response



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## Program Delivery & Design

At the beginning of 2020, the SSN had planned four Summits: Townsville (building on pre-existing relationships from the 2019 pilot event), and Cairns, Toowoomba and Brisbane to establish new relationships. Unfortunately, as most organisations experienced, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in modified plans.

As the proposed timeframe for the Summit drew closer, the difficult decision was made to deliver an a combined online event for North and Far North Queensland schools. The SSN Chief Steward (CS) and Chairperson facilitated the event from St Patrick's College Townsville. Following this the CS visited schools and councils in Townsville and Cairns to experience sustainability programs first-hand.

The event program was built around three key elements:

- keynote plenary to engage and inspire
- workshops to improve understanding and skills for specific populations within schools
- school showcase to learn more from regional schools and motivate schools to commence and/or develop their programs.

The keynote speakers included Craig Reucassel from ABC's Fight for Planet A: Our Climate Challenge, Holley Somerville Knott from Tell Someone Who Cares, Garrett Swearingen from Australian Youth Climate Coalition, Cairns Mayor Bob Manning, Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill, Solar Schools Founder Rob Breuer, St Patrick's College Principal Amber Hauff, and Regional STEM Champion Kelly Soenario. Craig and Holley were the favourites according to the event review.

*"The first session with the keynote speakers was great. I loved Craig's presentation. My kids were very impressed with Holly, even though they knew they could not be heard, they all applauded and cheered at the end of her presentation, and were still talking about her after returning to class."*

Workshops were offered for primary students, secondary students, teachers, parents, and business service managers/principals. Facilitators included: Belgian Garden State School students, Reef Guardian School Program, Ed Burton, Trinity Bay State High School students, Garrett Swearingen, Rob Breuer, Kylie Moses, Erin Merrin, Australian Parents for Climate Change Founder Suzie Brown and Glowing Green Australia's Larissa Rose.



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Australian Association for  
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**Queensland Chapter**

## Program Delivery & Design

Mixed reviews were received for the workshops. As can be expected from any event, there was some uncertainty regarding how the workshops would be delivered and which workshop participants had chosen or been allocated to. As this was the first time the SSN facilitated an event using Zoom rooms, much can be learnt for future events to ensure the process runs more smoothly from registration to delivery.

Other feedback to help improve the event identified the need for more interactivity and hands on learning in the workshops. Although this was the intention of the event design, it is clear the expectation of organisers and participants was not necessarily met by all workshop facilitators. The SSN can improve on this by working more closely with workshop facilitators prior to the event to ensure experiential learning occurs.

*"I really enjoyed the session with Glowing Green and it gave me some good ideas on where to begin our school journey."*

An audience and SSN favourite was the final session of the day. Seven schools showcased their different approaches to education for sustainability and were interviewed by Craig Reucassel. This is always an exciting element as youth leaders are empowered to demonstrate what is possible in the educational context.

*"Loved seeing what other schools journeys have been."*

Based on exit interviews with both Townsville and Cairns council, two schools and event partners, along with survey feedback, the SSN intend to deliver the Summits in 2021 utilising the same three event design elements. However, improvements will be made to the workshops to ensure pragmatic learning opportunities.

Finally, it is worth noting that in year one the event was delivered in person and this event was delivered primarily online. The exceptions included two SSN volunteers, St Patrick's College Townsville and some schools who were hosted by Cairns Regional Council at their chambers. Although minor technological issues occurred, the feedback regarding hosting the event online was positive.

*"I appreciated it being online this year. There is limited chance I can get primary school students to Townsville as was the case last year. I also liked that possibly more students could participate directly."*



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## Program Delivery & Design

During the community engagement phase of the event, requests were received from other locations in Queensland to host a Summit event. Unfortunately, in 2020 the SSN did not have the capacity to do so. Therefore, in 2021 we aim to host an increased number of Summits across the state and potentially interstate using a 'Touring Summit' model.

*"Thanks for organising this because it's important that we're all connected if we want to make far-reaching change."*

It is also intended in 2021, that the events will be offered both utilising online and in person options. As identified via the 2020 Summit, the logistics of in person events at times exclude some schools from participating. This may be due to the increased workloads involved in risk assessments, the cost involved in travelling, or the other demands of student workloads that prevent students from participating in the full day program. Yet it is also noted that some schools value the opportunity for networking and connectivity that in person events offer.

The SSN will work with local councils and/or schools in 2021 to deliver an in person option and also share this with regional participants online also.

*"The event was excellent. The kids particularly enjoyed being on a zoom session with Craig. We have watched the "War on Waste" and "Fight for Planet A" series and love the way Craig presents. We love that Craig is always smiling. We admire his perseverance, despite Government inaction and apathy. We love how Craig explores and explains the problems of waste and climate change and gently encourages ordinary citizens to take action for a sustainable future. It's also very inspiring to see what schools are doing in the area of environmental education."*



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# Event Goals

#FightForPlanetA

The Connecting Regional Queensland: Sustainable Schools Summit aimed to:

- showcase leading local schools including Reef Guardian Schools
- empower youth leadership by implementing the Kids Teaching Kids model
- deliver education for sustainability professional development for the whole school community
- enable regional connectivity
- raise awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

*Showcase leading local schools including Reef Guardian Schools*

Nine schools in total were directly showcased during the event. Seven of these shared their school's sustainability story in the afternoon session of the event. Most schools were Reef Guardian Schools (RGS) which demonstrates the importance of the partnership with RGS.

*Empower youth leadership by implementing the Kids Teaching Kids (KTK) model*

Two presenting schools, Belgian Gardens State School and Trinity Bay State High School utilised the Kids Teaching Kids model to design and deliver a workshop for other students. Although direct assessment of this process did not occur feedback from participants was positive. In the future, this aspect of the event needs direct evaluation built into the process.



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# Event Goals

*Deliver education for sustainability professional development for the whole school community*

Invited to this event were students (primary and secondary), teachers, parents, and school leaders (principals and business service managers). Professional development was offered to these school populations, however students and teachers were the primary attendees.

In 2021, more work needs to be done to engage parents and school leaders in the event as participants, rather than those enabling others to attend.

*Enable regional connectivity*

One of the main event goals was to enable regional connectivity. As one teacher identified, although Townsville and Cairns are relatively close in terms of the broader Queensland geographical region, it is not often they have an opportunity to learn from each other.

As this was an online event certain steps were taken to ensure the event only involved North and Far North Queensland schools, except for invited presenters. It was identified during the ticketing process that three registrations were not from the region and as a result of this identification they did not participate in the event.

Marketing was also targeted to the region to ensure the intended community was engaged.

*Raise awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

The event survey identified 50% of attendees had not heard about the SDGs before the event. Although, SDGs were introduced and discussed throughout the event, no post event survey occurred to assess the depth of awareness that occurred as a result of the Summit.

Similarly to the KTK goal, it is important in 2021 to build in assessment processes regarding the SDGs improve reporting on this event goal.



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# Funding Model

Due to the generous support of two event sponsors and one successful grant application, the 2020 Summit costs were covered. In total the event costs incurred were \$18,684.00, whilst the funds received were \$18,995. It is estimated that the value of the in-kind support received to deliver this event was \$14,350. It is clear events like the Sustainable Schools Summit cannot be delivered without the generous support of the SSN volunteers, our partners and the school communities that were involved in presenting and hosting, as well as local councils.

## Costs

The event costs were categorised into marketing, travel and accommodation, speaker fees, SSN administration and project management fees and a small amount for miscellaneous items. The two most significant costs were the speaker fees, closely followed by SSN project management costs.

## Financial Support

This event would not have been possible without the financial support of the City of Townsville (grant), and Ergon Energy and Cairns Regional Council (both were major sponsors). It is noteworthy that the SSN offered a tiered ticketing structure with no compulsory ticketing cost. This means participants were able to choose a free option, \$10 or \$20. Incredibly, some schools opted to pay the \$20 fee or purchased tickets at all three pricing levels as a sign of support and valuing this event.

The SSN will continue to utilise a tiered option for regional events to ensure both accessibility and inclusivity for all schools and school community members, as well as ensuring some additional funding to cover event costs. It is noted that \$10,000 is the optimal budget to ensure the financial success of future events.

## In-kind Support

Thank you to all of the schools, organisations and individuals who volunteered their time and expertise to facilitate this event. Thank you also to St Patrick's College Townsville and Cairns Regional Council who offered their venues free of charge.

*Please note: \$6.99 was donated to Indigenous scholarships through the ticketing platform Humanitix.*



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# Marketing

Engaging with regional schools is a top priority for the SSN. It is our intention to develop reciprocal relationships with regional schools whereby we learn from them and we have an opportunity to deliver professional development that these schools may not have access to due to their geographic location.

As Bob Manning, Cairns Mayor identified at the Summit:

***"We have an enormous responsibility to manage our environment sustainably."***

Events like the Summit are about building the relationships in regional areas to ensure we have the capacity to meet these responsibilities.

To ensure optimal participation in this even the SSN first and foremost rely on the event partnership model. This means we rely on our partners to reach more schools and their community than we could have achieved in isolation. The event survey indicated that Reef Guardians Schools Program and Cairns Regional Council were particularly helpful in reaching participants.

The SSN also utilised both paid and unpaid campaign features on social media. For the first time LinkedIn was utilised although the survey results did not indicate this was as successful as Facebook. Nevertheless, 2086 impressions were achieved from the LinkedIn campaign and it was identifiable that the campaign reached business service managers as the third highest job title engaged.



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# Marketing

Facebook was the most utilised social media platform for marketing the Sustainable Schools Summit. Two paid campaigns were utilised targeting audiences in both the Townsville and Cairns regions. The first campaign reached 7,430 people and achieved 182 clicks, whilst the second campaign reached 12180 people and achieved 210 clicks. Survey responses indicated Facebook was a major source of information about the event for participants.

The SSN was fortunate to engage an experienced media coordinator to prepare a media release for the 2020 Summit. This media release was delivered to media outlets in both the Townsville and Cairns regions. The result was a story in the Townsville Bulletin education liftout, story in the Cairns Post, interviews for ABC Radio North Queensland both before and during the event, Channel 9 news and an interview and story in the Cairns Local News publication.

Undoubtedly the inclusion of Craig Reucassel in the event delivered a more engaged media as Craig's profile is significant given he had an ABC program running at the time of the event (Big Weather) and another significant ABC series in 2020: Fight for Planet A: Our Climate Challenge.

## Recommendations for 2021

It is important to choose keynote speakers that are of interest to regional schools. As the SSN is only beginning our journey of engaging with regional schools, both a high profile speaker and careful choices of partners are more likely to ensure the Summit events are both meaningful and achieve positive participation rates.



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# Summit Participants

The Summit involved 34 schools including presenting schools Belgian Gardens State School, St Patrick's College Townsville, All Saints Anglican School, Trinity Bay State High School, Smithfield State High School, Malanda State School, Burdekin Catholic High School, Mudgeeraba State School, North Keppel Island Environmental Education Centre, and Ryan Catholic College.

In total over 24 organisations registered to participate in the event including the event partners and presenters.

The ticketing platform, Humanitix, identified 97 tickets sold from 63 orders. From these registrations, 152 zoom logins occurred throughout the day, which includes some schools logging in using multiple computers.

It is estimated based on the registrations on the ticketing platform and counting the numbers of participants in the screens during the event, that approximately 200 attendees were involved in the 2020 Summit.

It is worth noting that the event invited students, parents, teachers and school leaders. The parent group were among the lowest in number and this is an area requiring improvement in future years.

Over a third of all schools registered were state schools, although the independent and catholic schools registered often had both junior and high school participants. It is recommended that workshops remain separate for primary and high school students to ensure activities are targeted.



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# Sponsors

Thank you so much to our sponsors who made this event possible. Without the support of Energy Queensland, the City of Townsville and Cairns Regional Council the SSN could not have covered the costs of the 2020 Summit.

Please show your gratitude to our sponsors by clicking on their logo and learning more about what they do.

Again, thank you Energy Queensland, City of Townsville, and Cairns Regional Council.



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# Recommendations for 2021

## *Program Design and Delivery*

Based on feedback, the SSN intend to deliver the Summits in 2021 utilising the same three event design elements. However, improvements will be made to the workshops to ensure an experiential learning opportunity.

In 2021 we aim to host an increased number of Summits across the state and potentially interstate using a 'Touring Summit' model. The SSN will work with local councils and/or schools in 2021 to deliver an in person option and also share this with regional participants online.

## *Event Goals*

The event goals will remain the same however it is recommended that more attention be given to measuring the impact of these goals in 2021.

## *Funding*

The SSN will continue to utilise a tiered option for regional events to ensure both accessibility and inclusivity for all schools and school community members, as well as ensuring some additional funding to cover event costs. It is noted that \$10,000 is the optimal budget to ensure the financial success of future events.

## *Marketing*

It is recommended that social media be utilised as the most affordable marketing mechanism in 2021. However, if funds are available advertising in education focused local media is also a good option. Further, regional radio stations should be engaged at an earlier stage to reach participants.

## *Participants*

To ensure a whole-of-school approach, the SSN will continue to work with the four school populations in 2021: students, teachers, parents and school leaders. More attention will be given to reaching parents and school leaders in 2021 to improve participation. It is also worth noting that the preferred attendee model is the same numbers of attendees however from more schools. Reaching more regional schools to engage in educating for sustainability is the ultimate goal.



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