Innovation needed to tackle climate change



There is growing support across our schools and TAFEs to address the climate emergency and embed sustainable practices across all aspects of public education.

Your union is committed to progressing action on the climate emergency and its impact on individual members, their workplaces and public education more broadly.

While we fight for system-wide change, we also recognise the abundance of high-quality work already being undertaken by passionate public educators.

At Manea Secondary College, Michele Watson (innovation and community links coordinator) and Lynette Hillier (biological sciences teacher) have spent years integrating education for sustainability into their practice.

This year, they co-founded the Innovation Academy (IA), bringing students and industry together to solve real-world problems through the lens of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The IA brings together students in Years 10 to 12 from seven different local schools. After a grounding in the Sustainable Development Goals, students meet with representatives from 17 different industries. Each industry presents a real-world challenge that is impacting their work, and students elect to work on a challenge that interests them.

Students often work with peers from different schools, and their focus varies widely. They may engage with an international company looking at windfarming, or work with a local shire to develop a makerspace.

Using the Design Thinking Process, each group develops a sustainable solution for the problem, liaising with their industry representative to ensure their solutions are realistic and effective. Michele and Lynette see clear benefits to the program, not just for students but also industry and local community.

“We feel that education should not be in isolation... it’s about engaging youth with their community and teaching them to be good citizens,” Michelle said.

In addition to the IA, students at Manea Secondary College engage with real-world sustainability learning in curricular and extra-curricular programs.

From working with schools and community groups in “growing for purpose” for Foodbank, to restoration and rehabilitation of the Mallokup Wetlands, both industry and students benefit from meaningful, experiential learning opportunities.

To learn more about the work your union is undertaking to address the climate emergency, visit our climate action hub.

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