Celebrating sustainability in the bay

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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 Dunsborough Primary School, sustainability is an important part of every day. From Walking School Buses and waterwise gardening to solar panels obtained through the Solar Schools program and a school canteen stocked with produce from the school's chickens and veggie gardens, environmentally friendly practices are central to school operations.

Teachers work tirelessly to ensure that student voice and action is embedded in this space, running a Green Ambassador program in which two students in each year group act as sustainability leaders, including speaking regularly at assemblies.

Once each year, the entire school stops, walks down the road and spends a day at Geographe Bay. Bay OK day is a highlight of the school year.

Organised by specialist teacher and sustainability leader Helena Nicholson for many years, and more recently led by senior teacher and SSTUWA member Jessy Rudland, Bay OK day is one of the biggest events in the Dunsborough Primary calendar and is a whole-school celebration of sustainability and Caring for Country.

“I am driven by creating an outdoor classroom environment, authentic learning on Wadandi Boodja and modelling continued respect and appreciation for the bay and surrounding environment which we all utilise daily,” Jessy said.

Bay OK day was founded in 2012, in partnership with the Geographe Catchments Council, when Dunsborough Primary School was first audited to be a Bay Friendly School.

The event has grown to include almost 30 different environmental education providers, all of whom volunteer their time and expertise to engage students with caring for their natural surroundings.

These organisations range from Fishability to the South West Capes Wildflower Society to the City of Busselton’s Meelup environment officer. Over the course of their schooling, students will engage in all the different activities on offer.

Students can see Geographe Bay from their school and have embraced caring for their natural environment.

The event itself is sustainable and is working towards adhering to the City of Busselton’s sustainable event guide.

As with any school event, safety is a priority in every aspect of the day. Jessy has spent considerable time understanding the Department of *Education’s Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures*, ensuring that all activities are compliant and safe.

While both Jessy and Helena acknowledge that this approach to sustainability takes a huge amount of commitment from the entire staff, they emphasise the positive impact on students and their attitudes towards the natural world.

“When we do what we do there’s no chance that students leave anything but footprints on the beach, but (they) take away with them skills and knowledge that prepare them to care for their local environment,” Helena said.

To learn more about the work the SSTUWA is undertaking to address the climate emergency, visit sstuwa.org.au/climate

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