

# Case Study

## Cornerstone College

**Years: 8 - 12**

**School population: 780**

**Location: Mt Barker**

**Source: Mary Butler SOSE, Biology Teacher and Margie Barnett, Working Towards Sustainability (WTS) Project Officer**

**A WOW Support School also involved in the Sustainable Schools Initiative**

### Highlights

The school has a strong sustainability focus, with a committee of dedicated staff co-ordinated by Margie Barnett, part-time Working Towards Sustainability (WTS) Project Officer. This is an indication of the support given to sustainability and to the staff vision by the College Council. The College received a KESAB Tidy Towns Environmental School Award in 2005.

A Student Environment Council (SEC) began in 2005 with members from all year levels. This group meets weekly at lunchtime. A 5c container collection system has been set up throughout the school and is run by SEC students with WTS staff support. Approximately \$250 was raised in 2005, and in Term 1 2006 nearly \$100 has already been collected. Funds will be returned to all students through various activities and events, such as a poster competition, a healthy fruit smoothie day or a sausage sizzle. These events will promote the use of this system.

The College was awarded 20 indigenous plants by SITA Environmental Solutions for being placed fifth by weight for paper / cardboard recycled by the school in 2004.

Recycling of organic waste is 'steaming' along with involvement from Home Economics and the staff room recycling system. Technology students built 3 compost bays and the Conservation and Land Management students have been shown how to 'turn' the compost to make a good product for use on garden beds.

Other environmental initiatives include developing wetland ponds to improve the water quality of 'run off' before it enters Purtinga Creek which runs through College property. Cornerstone won an Origin Energy \$10 000 community prize which will be used to relocate and refit a transportable building to the wetland for use as an Environmental Education Centre.



2005 KESAB Tidy Towns Awards (Cornerstone College on right)



## What the school says about waste

*'In 2005 we started a Student Environment Council (SEC). We all have fun because we have a passion for the environment and the school.'*

*KESAB visited the College to conduct a waste audit and to evaluate our situation. We found that we were wasting a lot of resources and money. We could be recycling more and collecting almost \$1000 each year. We also talked about the litter problem and in 2006 we hope to change this. Staff also recycle in the staff room and compost organic material. Home Economics also compost their food scraps. Some students went to the Riverland River Health Conference and learnt heaps! Another investigation found that we were also wasting a lot of water by over-watering the oval. This was brought to the attention of the grounds staff and the watering program has since been reviewed. We hope that the information that we have collected will be useful in helping us to take action in 2006.'*

Adam, Year 9



2005 Solid Waste Audit

## Waste Systems and Learning

### Waste in Curriculum

The Geography curriculum considers a range of environmental issues which includes learning about waste. One investigation analysed the location of litter in the yard and the source of that litter. As a result recommendations were made for the appropriate location of both rubbish and 5c deposit recycling bins around the school.

Technical Studies students were involved in making a recycling cupboard for the staff room and compost bays for organic material.

Mathematics students worked with data from a 2005 Waste Audit to make recommendations on the waste streams in the school.

**See Section 4: WOW in Curriculum.**

### Reducing

Efforts to reduce paper use include distributing 'Daily notices' for staff and students in electronic form (saving at least 6 reams of paper per year), and supporting on-line learning and the electronic submission of work. The use of shared resources on the computer network also helps to reduce the number of photocopies required. Incentives are used to encourage 'double-sided' printing and photocopying.



Effective bin systems



Student constructed compost bays



### Getting started and keeping it going

#### Reusing

Spare parts and / or materials are reused in Technical Studies and Art. In all areas paper is set aside for reuse. The Maintenance Department reuses 'old' equipment or furniture in other ways.

#### Recycling

White paper and mixed coloured paper / cardboard are recycled through SITA Environmental Solutions. 60 litre paper / cardboard recycling bins are located in each classroom and most administration areas. Bins are emptied each Friday morning by Home Group volunteers.

The number of bins used to collect 5c containers has increased. The bins are emptied and sorted every Friday by SEC members. Recyclables are also collected from the Canteen, Staff and Home Economics areas at the same time. All material is taken, with the support of grounds staff, to a collection depot in Mount Barker and to the local Scout Depot.

Containers for compostable scraps are located in the Home Economics and staff rooms. Composting of this material and garden waste occurs on site.

The current waste practices began over five years ago with a group of committed staff. Senior management and the College Council supported the creation of a 'Working Towards Sustainability' (WTS) group and the creation of a part-time position of Sustainability Project Officer in 2004.

Staff are actively involved in the paper / cardboard and 5c container recycling procedure on Friday mornings and are keen to incorporate relevant issues into the curriculum.

Students became involved late in 2003 with paper / cardboard recycling. They demonstrate a willingness to volunteer their time to being involved in waste minimisation strategies and practices as is demonstrated by the formation of the SEC in 2005.

In recent months (in 2006) a strategic plan has been finalised and will be presented by the WTS staff to Senior Management.

#### Whole School Community

Mary Butler reports,

*'The SEC supported the Food and Fun Fest this year with a stall selling plants, KESAB Better Bags and nest boxes, and took the opportunity to promote the SEC and WTS to other students and parents. The BIG PLAN is to make this event a Green Event next year but we have to get in early at the planning stage which is now! We thought that this would be the best way to educate the school community and give support to the concept that we can make a difference.'*