



Case Study

Mulga Street Primary School

Years: R - 7

School population: 475

Location: Mt Gambier

Source: Gail Lewis

A WOW Support School

Highlights

In 2005, the school received a KESAB Tidy Towns Environmental School Award for environmental education and action.

Early in 2003 the school was successful in obtaining an Ecologically Sustainable Development Grant (from DECS) of just over \$11 000 and a Recycling and Waste Management program was developed with a budget for 2004.

In 1999 Gail Lewis commenced work in the existing Landcare yard which had ceased functioning and began a lunchtime program with students. Over time, a budget line was established, tools were purchased and the program was extended to involve work in the school grounds.

A Recycling Enterprise Group was established with the Principal, two student representatives from Years 5, 6 and 7, a Grounds Committee member, interested parents, and a teacher coordinator.

The school's Recycling Shed, which was planned and organised by students over 12 weeks, was officially opened in November 2004 by Mr Ken Jones (on behalf of Ian

Webber) from Green Triangle Recyclers. Extensive media coverage surrounded the event, with quotes below taken from student speeches at the opening.

What students say about waste

On the topic of collecting food scraps and establishing a composting system in the Landcare yard, Natasha Lawson explained,

'A lot of planning needed to happen, with deciding what this collection would look like, how it would work and what we needed.'

Mr and Mrs Holmes from Badenoch's deli supplied us with large empty ice cream buckets as the basis for our compost bins.

When our bins were ready for use, educating everyone on how to use them saw students holding information sessions at whole school assemblies and special assemblies when parents were present.

Over the last 3 terms we have made gradual changes to our program for it to work more successfully.

We have collected some data and discovered that from the various areas of our school each day, we collect, then compost almost 15 kilograms of food scraps. That's about 60 kilograms of scraps a week!

Each term we compost 600 kilograms of waste instead of putting it in our garbage.'

Breanna Hassam reported that

'we researched amounts and types of waste in areas of the school by collecting bin data, that means emptying and sorting through bins. Not very pleasant, but very informative!'



2005 KESAB Tidy Towns Awards (Mulga Street PS on right)



Waste Systems and Learning

Waste in Curriculum

The Recycling and Waste Management program is linked to Enterprise Education for middle school students. The KESAB Tidy Towns Environmental School Award 2005 recognised the school's achievements for the way environmental education and action has developed into a sequential and fully-integrated component of the school curriculum.

Waste and / or litter education is included in Environmental Education planning for Years 3 - 7.

Reducing

In 2006, collection of the large waste bin only takes place once a week having been reduced from 3 times a week. 2 waterless urinals, saving up to 200,000 litres of water per year, have been installed to reduce water use.

Reusing

Large quantities of boxes and packaging and some plastic containers and lids are reused for construction in the Art room.



Fruit and vegetable scraps make great compost

Recycling

The school processes 600 kilograms of food scrap waste each term. Food scraps are collected from bins near every classroom and one class is responsible for taking them to the compost box and periodically to the 3 worm farms which are located in the Landcare yard. Students were involved in the planning and construction of the compost box. The liquid produced by the worm farms is used by the students to fertilise their garden plots.

Prunings and plant debris are mulched and used around trees and plants in the school grounds as well as in the composting box in the Landcare yard. Bokashi composting has been introduced as an alternative way to compost.

The weekly Gardening School Care program involves a group of 10 to 30 students who nominate to plant, weed and maintain the appearance of the various garden areas around the school, such as the Federation Garden and the portable garden beds.



Great growing in the Landcare yard

The 5c container collection was boosted with the purchase of 10 metal bins with a chute in the lid. Students designed logos for these bins which are located next to rubbish bins in the school yard. The collection of container deposit items per term in 2006 has almost doubled the 2005 figures, raising almost \$100 per term.

A well-organised paper / cardboard collection system exists using bins made from water softener parts donated by a local plumber (with holes in the sides for ease of carrying). Additional lined cardboard collection bins are used inside in some areas. Most weeks 3 bales are filled at an average of 30 bales per term, an excellent example of recovering resources for recycling.



Clear signage and instructions for 5c collection



Empty printer, photocopier and fax cartridges are collected and recycled through the 'Go for Green' program and the school has received a recycled plastic bench seat for its efforts.

With support from local business, the school has been processing 3 - 4 boxes per term with 'Go For Green'.

Mobile phones are collected and recycled through a Victorian company which donates an amount per phone to charity. The students nominated Red Cross.

Additional recyclables collected include plastic (1-2 bales per term), tin (¼ bale per term), and some glass containers.

General household batteries are recycled with a local waste company.



Well managed worm composting

Getting started and keeping it going

The Recycling and Waste Management program began in earnest in 2003 with an \$11 000 grant to establish waste management programs. Although a number of waste management initiatives existed, such as composting of food scraps in the Landcare yard, there was no coordinated whole school program educating everyone about the importance and value in recycling and managing school waste.

Gail Lewis reports that two things needed to happen before the Recycling and Waste Management program could be successful. Firstly, a very high level of involvement from students was needed, and secondly, that students needed to be involved in decision-making during this process to establish ownership and respect for what the school was doing.

Support from senior management at 'the top' is vital. Gail acknowledges the Principal's continuing interest, involvement and commitment to waste programs which is appreciated by those involved.



5c bins located next to rubbish bins



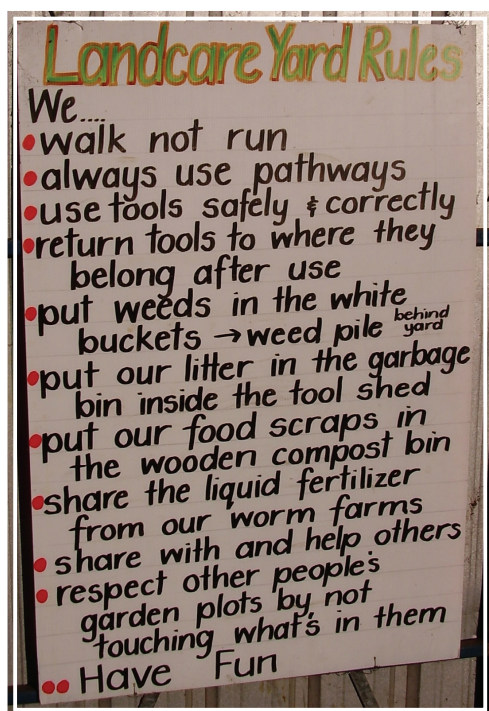
Wipe out Waste



Whole School Community

Whole school community involvement has occurred every step of the way, and this is integral to the success of waste programs.

When the need for a safe and secure place in which to process and store paper / cardboard and 5c containers was identified, the Recycling Enterprise Group sought assistance from the wider community in designing and developing the Recycling Shed. A representative from Green Triangle Recyclers provided advice on arranging effective sorting processes.



Garden guidelines ensure safety and fun!

Local industry was contacted about recycling printer, copier and fax cartridges through the school. Scotts Transport supports the program in this way and it is hoped that other companies will follow suit in the future.

A local plumber was contacted by students for help with paper / cardboard bins and resulted in the donation of water softener parts with hand-holds cut in the side for ease of carrying.

Continually educating others about what is happening at the school and seeking feedback on what is being done and how it is going, are key aspects of the Recycling and Waste Management program's success.

Student Michael Markham describes how this has been achieved.

'During the year we have done this in several ways

- *Sent classes questionnaires and collated their responses*
- *Taken classes on tours to explain how our recycling programs work*
- *Ran information sessions at assemblies and received feedback*
- *Asked adult members of the Recycling Committee for their ideas, opinions and feedback about our programs*
- *Placed regular information about developments in our school newsletter*
- *Two students were interviewed on ABC radio*
- *Articles in our local newspaper, The Border Watch and DECS Xpress'*



Clever student slogans on 5c container bins