

Case Study

Unley High School

Years: 8 - 12

School population: 1400

Location: Netherby

Source: Rob Carthew

A WOW Support School also involved with the Sustainable Schools and Solar Schools initiatives.

Highlights

Unley High has a motivated and coordinated Environment Group, which is a key factor in waste reduction initiatives and plays a major role in driving sustainability processes and education within the school.

School waste initiatives have grown since 2001 when the Environment Group was begun by a student, Emma Porter. Emma began a paper and card recycling program with \$500 support from Rotary which was matched by the Principal. The local council has also supported school recycling initiatives.

The Environment Group continues to play a key role in waste programs. In 2004, \$5 000 was received from the SITA Schools Recycling program for paper and cardboard.

In 2005, approximately 20 tonnes of paper / cardboard and computer parts were recycled, together with over 50 cubic metres of plastic!

The Environment Group pays for recycling initiatives and in 2005 was funded by money raised through the schools 5c container collection. Yr 10 metalwork students in 2005 created new collection cages to further encourage 5c recycling and fundraising.

The school has recently purchased 100% recycled plastic desks and will continue this practice in future refurbishment.



Paper / card collection was begun by a student in 2001



A well used 5c container collection system



The Environment Group plays a key role



Wipe out Waste



What the school says about waste

Georgia Roberts, President of the Environment Group provided the following information on the group's activities since 2004.

'After we won the \$5000 from SITA for paper and card recycling, we looked at how we could support our canteen and grounds woman. The canteen needed help to transport their collection of cardboard. They asked if we could buy a trolley in which the cardboard could be stored and then easily transported to where it was collected each Thursday. Our grounds woman Julie, who has also been fantastic with her support of our group, wanted a mulcher so that branches and cuttings could be mulched and placed in the garden beds rather than be removed in the waste. The Environment Group was happy to support both requests. The canteen saves time and the recycling process for their card has been made much easier. Julie our grounds woman has converted many branches into mulch and has reduced the amount of branches needed to be removed through the waste system.'

The main motivating factor is an interest in the environment. Seeing things being done and improvements around the school is very satisfying. Working with other students who have a similar interest in the environment is also a big plus. We all seem to get along well and are willing to work together.'

To change processes in the school we work out what we would like to do and try to come up with the best plan of how we can implement that change. We work through our teacher mentor and when we are prepared we then talk to the relevant person or committee within the school. If the change requires infrastructure we try to provide whatever support we can. Usually the staff and principal are very supportive and offer suggestions and help us where they can.'



Notepads made from scrap paper

Rob Carthew, staff representative on the Environment Group says:

'The Environment Group was instrumental in the erection of three - one cubic metre recycling cages for 5c deposit containers. These have been very successful and various groups around the school have done the emptying. Most funds for running the Environment Group come from the deposit containers. At the end of 2005 a group of year 10 metalwork students worked with a staff member to erect a further three deposit cages that have been placed around the school.'

The Environment Group has supported the canteen with their plastic recycling efforts and now most plastic that comes into the school is recycled. Last year the group was consulted about the use of desks made from recycled plastic. The school is now trialling these. Desk tops can easily be replaced if damaged and damaged tops are returned to the manufacturer for recycling.'

Cartridges for photocopiers and printers are recycled and some businesses occasionally drop cartridges in at the school for us to recycle.'

Broken computer parts are now recycled whenever possible. The print room makes up pads from one-sided sheets of paper.'

A herb garden is being re-established close to the Home Economics kitchens. The Environment Group is supporting a worm farm in this garden to break down kitchen wastes and produce castings to improve herb growth. This will have spin offs in saving the cost of purchasing herbs and reduce waste going to landfill. Students will be able to use the worm farm and see how easy it would be to implement one at home.'



Recently purchased recycled plastic desks

Waste Systems and Learning

Waste in Curriculum

Waste is incorporated in the curriculum areas of SOSE, Science, Tech Studies and Australian Studies, and each home group is responsible for paper and cardboard recycling in their rooms. Year 10 metalwork students created three additional 5c recycling cages in 2005.

Reducing

Reduction of waste has been considerable by diverting much material into recycling streams. Mulching of garden material for use on school gardens has saved this valuable resource from being sent to landfill.

Reusing

Reuse of materials includes a School Services Officer (SSO) using single-sided paper in the print room to produce note pads, and the Canteen collects plastic lids for reuse by local kindergartens.

Recycling

Paper and cardboard recycling occurs in all classrooms, administration areas and the canteen.

Cartridge and toner bottles are recycled through the SA 'Go for Green' program.

5c containers are collected throughout the school with significant funds raised from recycling.

Film (non-rigid) plastic is recycled by the canteen and other areas through Enviroligix.

Kerbside (council) recyclables are collected in the staffroom.

Garden material is recycled into mulch for school gardens via grounds staff, and kitchen waste from Home Economics and the staffroom will soon be used for worm composting.

The purchase of recycled products to complete the recycling loop occurs with the recent purchase of recycled plastic desks.



Cartridges collected through 'Go for Green'

Getting started and keeping it going

Time, money and effective support are barriers for beginning any new initiatives in schools. Unley's strategy was to 'work like ants - one bit at a time'.

'We worked on what we could manage and aimed to do it well and to set up easily continuing programs. Staff support was sought via students speaking at staff meetings.'

Rob Carthew

Whole School Community

Whole school community involvement includes strong student and staff links with excellent support by grounds staff, canteen and administration areas. Local council services are available to the school, and parental involvement occurs through finance and grounds committees, working bees and the opportunity for families to contribute to school recycling collections.



Clean lids are collected by the Canteen for kindergartens

Benefits of Waste programs

'The school has benefited through all of these measures. The cost of waste removal from the school is considerably less than for other similar-sized schools.'

Students from the Environment group have gone on to be leaders outside of the school. One of those students attended waste audit training with KESAB and was closely involved in the creation of the KESAB Solid Waste Audit Kit. A number are on the Youth Environment Council.

In class, students often refer to practices in place around the school to reduce waste. Some are changing the habits of their families by putting into practice at home what they have learnt at school.

The actions of one person formed the basis of what we do today. It isn't that hard if you want to.'

Rob Carthew