

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION



Education Queensland's services also support goals beyond education, such as environmental protection and community development.

Environmental education

The number of environmental education centres grew by one (at Barcardine) to twenty-two. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation described these centres as among the most innovative in the world.

'The centre plays an important role in the local Landcare group ... and receives regular requests for consultancy involvement in a whole range of environmental issues. One project entails ongoing monitoring and revegetation of the natural environment on South Stradbroke Island.'

(Jacobs Well Environmental Education Centre)

In 1999, 7400 year 12 students studied biological science and 1300 did marine studies. Both were significant increases on the previous year. Twenty-six schools trialled the new studies of society and environment P-10 syllabus, which has a stronger environmental emphasis.

Many schools operated environment areas and actively involved their students in environmental clubs and events.

'6.2 hectares of learnscape areas have been specifically developed to enhance the school environmental education programs. There is an Aboriginal food garden, colour and scent garden, habitat garden, growing garden/shade house, line and texture garden, shape garden, rainforest and koala corridor.'

(Chatswood Hills State School)

Caring for school environments

Schools reduced expenditure on water by 5 per cent and waste by 4 per cent but increased their electricity costs by 2 per cent (due to extra airconditioning).

The 670 largest schools took responsibility for their own utilities bills, giving them the incentive to economise on energy. A program to increase energy efficiency in schools resulted in savings, such as the 50 per cent saving achieved by Byfield State School. Many schools audited their water consumption and found ways to conserve water. All new facilities now include water-saving devices.

The number of schools in the School Communities Recycling All Paper scheme increased from 180 to 270, affecting 126 000 students.

Community building

Education Queensland helps support rural communities, by maintaining over 700 schools in towns with populations of less than 10 000 people. These schools provide local employment and facilities.

During the year, Connect-Ed provided 94 per cent of Queenslanders with access to the Internet for the cost of a local call (once they have paid for a connection).

State schools provide buildings and sporting facilities for public use, and act as centres for clubs and community service organisations. Eight schools began operating as community-access schools, offering a base for other community services.

'The school facilities are regularly used by a variety of community groups including church groups, martial arts groups, dance classes, a dog obedience school, a crèche and kindergarten class and tennis classes.'

(Acacia Ridge State School)

'School is sometimes the first and only community some kids belong to.'

(Feedback during the consultations)

Outlook

- A new School and Community Capital Innovators Scheme will provide \$1 million for projects that increase community use of school facilities.