

## New Environmental education policy for schools in 2001

The new *Environmental Education Policy for Schools* will be delivered to schools in 2001. It contains:

- the policy document itself, which outlines the rationale, aims, objectives and strategies for implementing environmental education
- a detailed support document entitled *Implementing the Environmental Education Policy in your school*, and
- a training and development package to be used at staff meetings as an introduction to the policy.

## Why do we need a revised environmental education policy at this time?

The simple answer to this question is that the current document, *Environmental Education Curriculum Statement K-12* (1989), has become outdated. The global environmental crisis was highlighted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, when environmental education was first seen in the context of ecologically sustainable development. Delegates returned to their countries to develop strategies at national, state and local government levels to support and endorse the principle of ecologically sustainable development (ESD). ESD is policy in this state and refers to patterns of human activities, which meet the needs of this current generation without prejudicing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This means that the state supports the principle that there should be no unreasonable depletion of any resource nor any significant damage to the environment and, ultimately, no significant decline in social stability.

Since 1989 there has been a growing awareness of the importance of biodiversity, natural capital\* and the effect of greenhouse gases on climate change. In addition, we have learned that teachers require more support in linking syllabus outcomes to the objectives of environmental education.

The new policy will update our approach to environmental education, assist teachers to implement environmental education across the curriculum and link school plans with syllabus outcomes.

## What is different about this new policy?

The main difference is the requirement for schools to develop a school environmental management plan that addresses three focus areas:

- the curriculum
- resource management, and
- school grounds management.

### Curriculum initiatives

In terms of curriculum, it is appreciated that schools need to draw on the formal and informal curriculum in order to develop students' capacity to support an ecologically sustainable world. They can do this on three fronts.

- As in the 1989 curriculum statement, schools are advised to identify and address outcomes in syllabuses which are specific to environmental education.
- Schools should also integrate the teaching of environmental education topics and issues in support of other syllabuses which do not have outcomes specific to environmental education.
- Schools should use the opportunities provided by special environmental events and celebrations to

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enhance student learning outcomes related to environmental education (e.g. World Environment Day). Managing resources within the school and developing sustainable plans for the school grounds may also serve as learning opportunities to support Board syllabuses.

### **Resource management**

As part of the school's environmental management plan, principals and staffs are asked to develop policies addressing energy, materials, waste and water. They are also required to employ best practice in sustainable resource management and comply with government regulations, laws and policies such as the Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP), stormwater legislation and the Litter Prevention Program.

Each of these policies and practices can be used as teaching and learning strategies to support syllabus outcomes.

### **School grounds management**

Developing strategies that link syllabus outcomes to the school's grounds is one of the most effective ways of carrying out environmental education programs, not only as a curriculum initiative, but as a means of contributing to sustainable practices within the community. For example, the school and its community may decide to implement long-term strategies which will rehabilitate areas of the school grounds and buildings, while at the same time developing them into outdoor learning places.

Managing school grounds is more than a mere beautification process. It involves activities that link school ground projects to the curriculum and as a part of the whole school plan, while at the same time demonstrating the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

## **How does the new policy relate to the Creative Arts key learning area?**

The Creative Arts key learning area provides a learning environment and curriculum which encourage understanding and appreciation of the physical environment (natural and built) and the socio-cultural environment.

In each of the art forms of dance, drama, music and visual arts, students can:

- explore examples of works where the artist has used the natural or built environments as a source of ideas (e.g. as a stimulus, a theme, a concept or an issue)
- explore examples of works that use or emphasise particular places and spaces (e.g. site-specific works, installations)
- explore works where the audience interacts with the natural or built environment
- investigate works that provide an historic record of environments—past, present, derelict, degraded, ruined, regenerated, restored
- interpret and discuss works that communicate expressive qualities of the Australian landscape (e.g. spaces, colours, flora and fauna)
- investigate natural or built environments that are significant to our cultural heritage
- investigate Indigenous works that establish a connection with place
- make works that use the natural or built environment as a source for ideas.

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\* The earth's natural resources and ecological systems that provide vital life support services to society, e.g. soil.