

Penrith Lakes Environmental Education Centre (PLEEC)

2014 Annual School Report



Principal's Message

During 2014 PLEEC faced a number of challenges. In term one the Centre relocated to a sky dive marquee within the Sydney International Regatta Centre (SIRC) on a temporary lease agreement due to PLDC requesting back the founding site after eighteen years of tenure. The Centre and visiting staff and students worked for almost six months in a leased sky diving marquee within SIRC before DEC demountable buildings could be installed and the Centre relocated again at the end of term 3 within another more appropriate temporary location within SIRC. During this difficult time SIRC offered incredible support for which PLEEC is very grateful.

All this has highlighted the ongoing issue of PLEEC lacking a permanent home since its inception and with a strong demand for educational services from an ever-growing number of schools, the one thing that the Centre essentially requires is a permanent home. Over the years this issue has caused a great amount of uncertainty that has been accompanied by a 'holding pattern' resulting in PLEEC not being able to establish any permanent educational facilities and infrastructure projects that would enhance teaching and learning experiences for visiting school students.



In addition to the physical changes in 2014, there were also significant staff changes, with term two seeing a new principal appointed and term four resulting in a new teacher being appointed. PLEEC still relies on the loyal and invaluable support of the previous staff for which it is very appreciative.

With a new 2015-217 school plan just completed, PLEEC is looking forward to an exciting year ahead in engaging students across K-12 in a variety of quality learning experiences.

I certify that information in this report is the result of a rigorous and self-evaluation process and is a balanced and genuine account of school's achievements and areas for development.

Branimir Lazendic
Principal

School Context

Penrith Lakes Environmental Education Centre (PLEEC) is one of twenty five Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) operated by the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC). PLEEC actively collaborates across this network to set directions and develop the organisation for environmental and sustainability education.

The Centre is distinguished by our unique local partnerships which have been formed with Catholic Education, Sydney International Regatta Centre, Penrith City Council and The Western Sydney Social Sciences' Teachers Association (WeSSSTA).

PLEEC programs are designed to address primary and secondary key learning areas, including fieldwork and sustainability education as a cross-curriculum priority. PLEEC's unique location within SIRC that is part of the greater Penrith Lakes Scheme and at the foothills of the Blue Mountains National Park, all combine to form an ideal learning environment.

Schools using PLEEC services are drawn primarily from the Western Sydney Metropolitan area. Teachers booking PLEEC are offered support (including phone conversations, pre-excursion visits, written confirmation, program advice and online support via the new PLEEC website) to ensure the service we provide meets their needs. Communication covers logistics, special needs of students, syllabus links, learning experiences, learning resources and risk assessments.

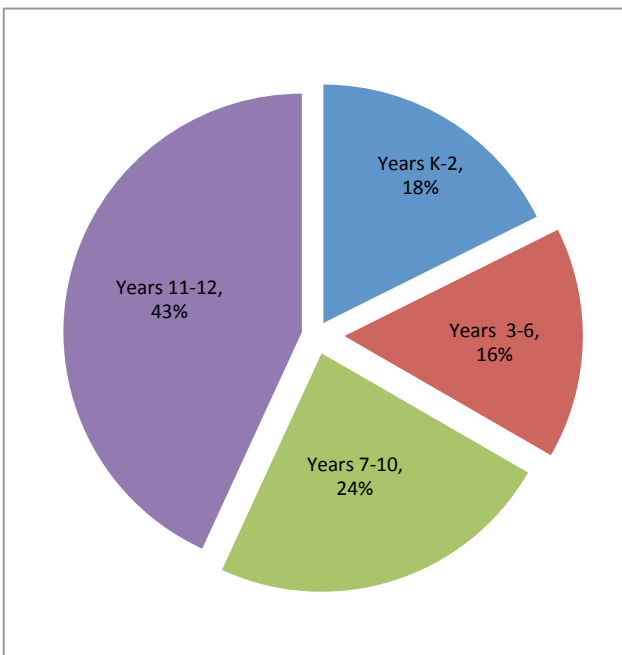
Student attendance profile

In 2014 PLEEC has hosted 4853 students from kindergarten to Year 12. This is lower than a long-term average of around 7500 students per year. The main cause for this was PLEEC eviction from its previous site, leading to two subsequent temporary relocations within SIRC. This resulted in PLEEC being closed for 12 school weeks and 17 schools being re-accommodated to other EEC's with all associated costs incurred by PLEEC. This level of disruption in 2014 resulted in PLEEC having significantly lower student attendance. We now look forward to 2015 and to returning PLEEC to its full operational capacity and maximising its educational benefit to schools.

Total excursion student numbers by term:

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	TOTAL
531	949	2112	1261	4853

Made up of:



Staff information

PLEEC is staffed by one full-time principal, teacher, School Administrative Manager (SAM) and a part time SASS general assistant. All teaching staff met the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

PLEEC has had significant staffing changes during 2014 which has resulted in a new principal starting at the beginning of term 2 2014 and a new permanent teacher being appointed at the end of term 4. Previous PLEEC staff continue to support and build the professional capacity of the new staff with their expertise and advice in both casual teacher capacity as well as WeSSSTA partners. This support has been invaluable in ensuring a smooth transition of staff and Centre programs into new hands. Regular return school bookings, with some coming back each year since PLEEC inception, serve as a testament of the quality of previous staff and the educational programs they developed over the years. All new staff at PLEEC are very grateful to Mr. Neill Cain (teacher and previous acting principal) and Mr. Stephen Etheridge (previous principal) for all their hard work, help and support during these staffing and physical transition phases for PLEEC. We sincerely wish them all the very best in their retirement and hope to see them coming back to PLEEC for many years to come.

Workforce composition

Position	Number
Principal	1
Classroom Teacher	1
School Administration Manager (SAM)	0.98
School General Assistant	0.2
Total	4

Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

Qualifications	% of staff
Degree or Diploma	100%
Postgraduate	100%
NSW Institute of Teachers Accreditation	50%



Financial summary

This summary covers funds for operating costs and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

Date of financial summary	30/11/2014
Income	\$
Balance brought forward	499,299.31
Global funds	48,281.05
Tied funds	7,272.44
School & community sources	41,153.80
Interest	13,295.38
Trust receipts	0.00
Canteen	0.00
Total income	110,002.67
Expenditure	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	11,898.75
Excursions	0.00
Extracurricular dissections	0.00
Library	722.51
Training & development	556
Tied funds	9,387.23
Casual relief teachers	1,553.93
Administration & office	33,178.40
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	8,780.46
Maintenance	8,330.59
Trust accounts	0.00
Capital programs	0.00
Total expenditure	74,407.87
Balance carried forward	534,894.11



A full copy of the school's 2014 financial statement is tabled at the PLEEC committee meetings. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

School performance 2014

Significant programs and initiatives

PLEEC provides curriculum based fieldwork and environmental education programs K-12 through our day to day work.

These quality teaching and learning experiences across KLA's and learning stages are customised to school needs and address BOSTES syllabus outcomes and DEC policy directions.

PLEEC teaching and learning programs provide students with learning experiences that would not otherwise be possible in a traditional classroom setting. As a result of this students often acquire fond and lifelong memories of their experiences provided by PLEEC. This is evidenced by high school students sometimes enthusiastically recalling and telling aspects of their previous primary school visits to PLEEC staff.

This is also shown in the remarkable over 90% return rate of schools each year.



Our most popular programs in 2014 were:

- Year 11 Biology 'Local Ecosystem' freshwater ecosystem fieldwork investigation;
- Year 11 and 12 Earth and Environmental Science 'Lithosphere' and 'Introduced Species' fieldwork investigations;

- Year 11 and 12 Geography 'Managing Urban Runoff' and 'Flood Plain Wetlands at Risk' fieldwork investigations;
- Year 9/10 'Water Management' and Year 7/8 Blue Mountains 'World Heritage' programs;
- Year 5/6 'Science at the Lakes' working scientifically fieldwork investigation;
- Year 3/4 'It Didn't Always Look Like This' history and the 'Great Yowie Hunt' science programs;
- Early stage 1 and Year 1/2 'Wet and Dry Environments / Minibeasts' science and HSIE programs.

These quality programs continue to be the most requested and praised by visiting teachers and students.

Aboriginal education

Aspects of Aboriginal culture and knowledge are integrated into most of the Centre's programs.

The Centre offers specific programs that educate students about the traditional Aboriginal inhabitants of the area, their relationship with the land and their use of natural bush resources.

Multicultural education

All PLEEC programs are developed to be suitable for, and sympathetic of, students from various cultural and religious backgrounds.

Anti-Bullying Policy

PLEEC has a policy of zero tolerance to bullying in any form. Our staff model and promote positive relationships that respect and accept individual differences and diversity within the school community. We support the DEC's anti-bullying policy through our words and actions and work collaboratively with the visiting schools to resolve any incidents of bullying when they occur. PLEEC prides itself on the friendly and inclusive learning environment we provide to visiting schools' staff and students.

Student Welfare

In 2014 PLEEC continued to focus on the safety and wellbeing of visiting students whilst on site and off-site, such as during our Blue Mountains World Heritage program. This was achieved through a review of all program risk assessments and associated operating procedures. This was especially important due to last years PLEEC relocation and associated teaching site changes. In addition to that all PLEEC staff completed first aid and anaphylaxis training.

Environmental Management

In 2014 PLEEC began to address the Centre's carbon footprint and ecological sustainability through a number of initiatives implemented.

Our support of 'Greenfleet' (a non for profit environmental charity that aims to plant native trees across Australia) meant that we have offset our carbon emissions from the Centre's two buses and a car. By supporting Greenfleet and their reforestation work, we are also restoring biodiversity areas and habitats for an array of native flora and fauna.

Another initiative saw PLEEC switching to 100% renewable energy whereby no greenhouse gas emissions are produced to supply our electricity needs. This greatly reduces our contribution to climate change, as electricity production from coal-fired generators is a major cause of climate change.



Last year the Centre established a herb and vegetable garden that grows a variety of organic vegetables and herbs that are sometimes given to visiting schools. In addition to that the garden

provides a good educational opportunity for students to learn about the numerous human and environmental benefits of eating fresh and locally produced organic produce.

PLEEC now recycles over 70% of its solid waste through a newly established paper, commingled and organic waste recycling stations. Our food scraps are composted on site through our worm farms resulting in high quality liquid fertilizer that is then used on our new herb and vegetable garden.

During the establishment of the Centre in the new temporary location, PLEEC has planted a number of native trees and shrubs to beautify and increase the local biodiversity of the area. The Centre has also purchased a number of native bird and bat tree boxes designed to support and attract a variety of native wildlife. Portable 'My Pro' cameras on poles that display on iPads can then later be used to observe the local wildlife nesting in the boxes and enhance some of the PLEEC teaching and learning programs.

During 2014 we have also begun to source our various Centre resource needs, such as ink cartridges and photocopy paper, from 'ecologically aware' suppliers. Doing this will minimise the impact of our products on the natural environment as consumer goods have some of the highest impact on our ecological footprint.

PLEEC has proudly promoted and shared these new initiatives as exemplars in sustainability for visiting schools.

Online Booking and School Support Procedures

In 2014 PLEEC embarked on streamlining its school booking and school communication and program support procedures using online 'Google Docs and Google Drive' as the main operational platforms. All school enquiries and bookings are now managed through these that work in conjunction with the PLEEC website. This allows for all excursion related materials such as confirmations, units of work, worksheets and risk

assessments to be sent via email, and be viewed and stored online. The benefits of this have been any time access to staff to various excursion information and related materials as well as the elimination of all paper confirmations and other visit materials previously sent via the post.

School planning and evaluation 2012—2014



School planning 2012—2014: progress in 2014

School priority 1

Student Engagement and Wellbeing

Outcome from 2012–2014

Enhanced student engagement in outdoor learning.

Evidence of progress towards outcome in 2014:

- All teaching PLEEC staff were in serviced in leading kayaking programs, rescue and safety procedures by an external provider. As a result of this, staff have obtained a 'Lifesaver Guide' kayaking award which has meant that we have now been able to offer the popular kayaking programs again;
- Development of plant identification signs and Aboriginal 'bush tucker' signs across the new teaching locations within SIRC that are used during the delivery of various PLEEC programs;
- Developed a new dip-netting and freshwater invertebrate identification site on the SIRC warm up lake within the

close proximity of the new PLEEC location;

- Established a number of frog and freshwater invertebrates ponds around the Centre, that also include a variety of native freshwater aquatic plants. This has enhanced the delivery of a number of teaching and learning programs PLEEC provides.

School priority 2

Connected Learning

Outcome from 2012–2014

Innovative use of interactive technologies to enhance the delivery of Centre's programs

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:

- Professional learning provided for all new PLEEC staff in the use of digital technologies and mobile devices designed to increase student engagement in authentic learning;
- Planning under way in developing multimodal texts such as iBooks on iPads to enhance the delivery of PLEEC programs;
- A new contemporary and easy to use website being developed that will contain all PLEEC pre, during and post program resources, such as units of work, worksheets and online videos. These can be then accessed at anytime by enquiring and visiting school staff.

School priority 3

Teacher Quality & Welfare

Outcome from 2012–2014

The centre's capacity to deliver Quality Teaching and Welfare programs will be enhanced.

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2014:

- During 2014, we began a review of all our existing PLEEC programs. As a result of this new units of work are being

developed using BOSTES program builder application, ensuring all programs being delivered at PLEEC are aligned with the new Australian Curriculum and NSW BOSTES syllabuses and their learning outcomes;

- Development of new risk assessments and safe operating procedures. PLEEC staff reviewed existing and developed new risk assessments and operating procedures for all its programs and new teaching locations. This resulted in safer working and learning environments being provided for all students and staff;
- The principal participated in professional learning in how to best plan and deliver 'Education for Sustainability' pedagogy that was provided by Sandra Nicholls, an industry professional who has authored the Australian Government's review of 'Education for Sustainability' in schools. As a result of this plans are now underway to develop whole year group projects for schools in 'Education for Sustainability' that will significantly support student cross-curricular learning and sustainability as a priority in the new Australian Curriculum;
- A new teacher (congratulations to Laura Greer) was appointed in term four after a rigorous selection process that will see the Centre and visiting students greatly benefit from her expertise and experiences in teaching and environmental education.

School priority 4

Environmental Education for Sustainability

Outcome from 2012–2014

Increase the number of schools meeting the challenges of environmental sustainability.

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2014:

- Using PLEEC staff expertise in whole school sustainability, PLEEC guided and assisted a number of schools in developing and implementing ecologically sustainable practices at their schools. This involved visiting the schools and meeting with their environmental

committee coordinator and students to discuss possible initiatives. These provided good learning opportunities for students involved as well helping make the school more ecologically sustainable. Follow up support and visits were conducted as required by the schools. This has resulted in participating schools feeling more supported and proficient at successfully implementing sustainability projects at their schools.

- Joined and began work with Hawkesbury Environmental Educators Network (HEEN), Keep Australia Beautiful 'Eco Schools Australia' and Regional Centre of Expertise (University of Western Sydney) on how to best support schools in developing and implementing their school environmental management plans (SEMP's).



Progress on Specific 2014 PLEEC Transition Targets

Target 1. Ensure new staff members are familiar with, and competent in, presenting all current Centre programs.

Our achievements include:

- A gradual induction and hands on training for new PLEEC staff by previous staff across all

PLEEC teaching and learning programs;

- Competent and quality delivery of current PLEEC programs by the new staff for all schools in 2014.

Target 2. Facilitate smooth transition from current site to new site, while continuing to deliver quality programs to schools.

Our achievements include:

- Close liaison with the Western Sydney Assets Management Unit, SIRC and Penrith City Council that resulted in a new PLEEC temporary site being established;
- Quality programs offered to all schools in the transition period that utilised both old and new sites to deliver quality programs for all schools visiting in 2014;

Target 3. Review all programs with reference to a new location and evaluate the access to sites that are currently utilised.

Our achievements include:

- All existing programs adjusted to suit new Centre location and teaching areas;
- Liaised with all partners to ensure the availability of all teaching sites in the future.

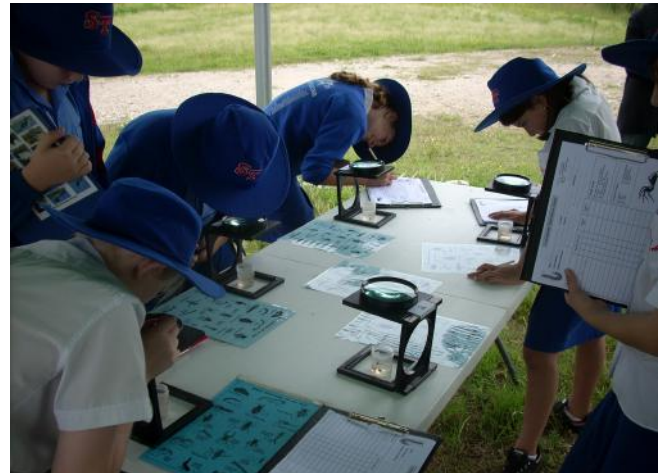
Professional learning

Professional learning is provided to all staff at the Centre through in house workshops or via external professional learning providers.

Professional learning included attendance at:

- PLEEC organised an EEC teacher professional learning day in 'Leading Group Kayaking' safely and effectively conducted by Kayaking NSW;
- NSW EEC annual conference at Macquarie University. This provided the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in environmental education and 'Education for Sustainability';
- Annual NSW EEC Principals Conference held at Observatory Hill EEC;
- Public Schools NSW Hawkesbury Network meetings and professional development days;

- 'Plugging into Nature' ICT in environmental education workshop held at Field of Mars EEC;
- First Aid and Senior First Aid Training Days;
- Strategic financial management training Teacher Professional Learning Day.
- SASS Conference held Cascade EEC in Dorrigo, NSW.



Parent/caregiver, student, and teacher satisfaction

In 2014, the school sought the opinions of teachers about PLEEC programs through an online survey sent out to visiting schools after their excursion.

The overall results to the following questions were:

1. The program outcomes and activities were appropriate to students:
82% Strongly Agreed.
2. The timing of each activity was appropriate to achieve expected outcomes:
73% Strongly Agreed.
3. Students were engaged and motivated to complete set tasks:
80% Strongly Agreed.
4. Teacher and parent feedback was positive:
73% Strongly Agreed.

The overall feedback, including verbal feedback from visiting staff, parents and students has been

overwhelmingly positive and this has also been evidenced by an over 90% re-booking rate of schools each year.

Future directions

The new 2015-2017 PLEEC School Plan has just been developed with three main strategic directions of;

- Empowered Learners;
- Enhanced Teacher Capacity; and
- Sustainable Partnerships.

These will guide the Centre direction over the next three years and with this new school plan as well as new staff, PLEEC is very excited about what it can achieve for student learning over the next three years.

About this report

In preparing this report, the self-evaluation committee has gathered information from evaluations conducted during the year and analysed other information about the school's practices and student learning outcomes. The self-evaluation committee and school planning committee have determined targets for the school's future development.

Branimir Lazendic – Principal

Laura Greer – Teacher

Debbie Farrell - SAM

School contact information

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the report and have the opportunity to provide feedback about the report at:

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/high-performance/annual-school-reports>

