

Community Educator of the Year & NSW Environmental Educator of the Year



SARAH JANTOS WINNER

Sarah Jantos has spent the last 8 years growing Green Heroes, an organisation that is educating and empowering the community to have meaningful involvement in wildlife conservation. She has a strong commitment to working with communities to understand environmental problems and create pathways for real engagement in solutions. We see this in her Loggerhead Incubation project, a collaboration with NPWS and the Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council where the community worked together to rescue, incubate, hatch and release over 300 endangered loggerhead turtles in Northern NSW. Through this project Sarah developed strong relationships with the local Indigenous Community who expressed their desire to reconnect youth to Sea Country. To realise this vision, Sarah developed a working contract with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (Aquatic reserves) to provide employment opportunities for young Aboriginal youth to become paid Sea Rangers - and leaders for the strengthened management and future protection of Sea Country. The program empowers Aboriginal youth to be young leaders in conservation and management of local, threatened marine environments. Sarah's commitment to wildlife conservation and developing relationships with her local Indigenous Community is commendable, a great example of how we can care for community and care for place.

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022

NSW Early Learning Educator of the Year Award



MARGARET GLEESON WINNER

Margaret Gleeson is the Director of Keiraville Community Preschool and has long displayed leadership in sustainability education in the early years sector. Margaret is a lifelong learner, regularly extending professional learning opportunities to her whole team. She has shown leadership in sustainability education over a long period. In 1992, Margaret won grant from State Pollution Control which resulted in the production of a sustainability resource booklet called Teaching Resources Environmental Education (TREE), advocating for the protection of bush space on Mt Keira. More recently, she has hosted meetings for the Illawarra Escarpment Alliance (IEA), which includes the Illawarra Greens, Native Plants Association, National Parks Association of NSW, Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council and Illawarra Bird Observers Group and ensured that 'Geera' is recognised as a sacred Aboriginal place, in need of greater protections.

Margaret has spoken at national and international early childhood conferences, is a founding member of the Early Years Nature Connections network and holds the position of committee secretary of the group which advocates for nature play and sustainability. She constantly reflects on practice with regard to purchasing and sourcing, resulting in developing an ethical decision filter to guide future purchasing to ensure a sustainable choice is made. A visit to Keiraville Community Preschool leaves visitors inspired and cognisant of the importance of living your values.

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022



NSW Government Educator of the Year Award



CHRISTIAN ECKARDT WINNER

Christian a vocal advocate and respected leader for Nature Play in NSW. His ability to lead nature play programs also includes advocacy for outdoor and environmental learning. Together with his team of experienced outdoor environmental educators, he has been creating and running nature play programs that focus on Australian culture and environment since 2017.

Christian's education and community programs have a strong focus on connecting Greater Sydney Parkland visitors to the Australian environment and culture. His dynamism and flexibility to take this face to face learning into an online platform due to COVID is to be commended. Congratulations to Christian for receiving the Government Educator of the Year Award for 2022.

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022



Sustainable Schools NSW School of the Year Award



Photo credit: Murrurundi Argus

BELLTREES PUBLIC SCHOOL WINNER

Belltrees Public School has a vision to become the greenest little school in Australia. With a target of reaching Net-Zero by the end of 2022, they have incorporated a wide range of activities to decrease their carbon footprint, rewild their school landscape and incorporate EE and STEM learning through their curriculum, pedagogy and philosophy for teaching and learning. Students are encouraged to learn through problem, inquiry, and project-based learning. Students participate in different competitions like the Green Innovation Awards, Wild at art and Tidy Towns and the Youth Environment Council has learnt skills in governance and leadership by writing their school environment management plan! The plan reflects baseline data acquired from ClimateClever environmental audits and uses the Eco-Schools self-evaluation method to encourage continuous learning. It also expands the school vision into the broader Hunter Valley community through partnerships with Toyota, Woolworths, Bunnings and local farmers, businesses and organisations.

The school's energy use has dropped over the last three years with installation of solar panels, LED lights, timers for a/c, solar electric fences, solar meters, solar lights, use of blinds, energy savers and passive cooling. They have also been working on behaviour initiatives that can make a big difference such as wearing jumpers, turning off lights and using fit bits to measure personal energy use. The school has planted over 500 trees, shrubs and grasses, ferns and reeds, uses compost and FOGO and the agriculture program has implemented a rotational grazing program to support further carbon sequestration. They have installed contour banks and terraformed paddocks to capture and filter run-off and store water using a 'ponds system' and leaky weirs. Well done and congratulations to the Belltrees community.

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022

Sustainable Schools NSW Teacher of the Year Award



ANN-KATHRIN KIEHN WINNER

Ann-Kathrin is a champion for whole school sustainability, an inspiring teaching professional and school leader. She engages in practical environment projects that have a real impact in a local setting, enhancing biodiversity, gardens, and minimising school waste. The primary school has a comprehensive waste reduction and recycling program, including green organics, recycling programs, and Return and Earn collection. She encourages involvement in a range of sustainability events and programs, including Clean Up Australia Day, citizen science programs, Koala Smart and Solar Buddy.

Ann-Kathrin enhances her own and others professional practice - by reviewing curriculum, ongoing mentoring, networking and personal skills development. She demonstrates leadership in her school community, regularly promoting sustainability initiatives, supporting the school Sustainability Committee and advocating for the creation of a dedicated space for environmental education at school (a building and a teacher). Her dedication and commitment have led to positive social and environmental impacts within her school and in the local community.

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022

Return & Earn Program Leader of the Year Award



ROSE EVERINGHAM

Rose Everingham has been teaching School Kitchen Gardens & Environmental Education at Regentville Public School for the past three years. A large school, with 690 students, the school has historically generated a large amount of waste. Rose introduced the Return & Earn program in classrooms, staff rooms, library, and canteen areas to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. Labelled bins for empty bottles and containers were issued to each location, and students from each class empty the containers on a daily basis. Many families also bring in eligible bottles and containers from home to contribute to the schools' efforts.

Each week Rose sends detailed messages to all the parents and caregivers to keep them updated on the number of containers recycled, the amount of money raised, and where the money will be spent. The funds raised from the Return & Earn program have gone toward materials for the School Kitchen Garden program, allowing the school to purchase worms, rakes, high-vis vests, seeds, and seedlings. Rose continues to teach students about the importance of recycling, sustainability, and caring for our environment.

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022

Community Educator of the Year Award



DARREN MARTIN HIGHLY COMMENDED

Darren Martin is the Community Greening Officer at the Royal Botanic Gardens. For the last year Darren has led a bushfire recovery healing and education program in communities, schools and preschools through the bushfire ravaged areas of NSW. He has been working with communities on the NSW South Coast and Southern Highlands to create sustainable, resilient food producing spaces that bring community together - they have created bush tucker gardens, wicking garden beds, yarning circles, learnt about native plant selection for a fire smart garden and started a community nursery.

With his calm and empathetic approach, Darren has forged lasting relationships and built capacity within these communities that are still suffering & he has fostered an appreciation of how a relatively simply task such as creating a garden can empower and heal. Darren has been a committed environmental educator for over 30 years, connecting teachers, students, and communities with nature and is an inspiration for people young and old .

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022

Sustainable Schools NSW Teacher of the Year Award



SHANNON KELLY HIGHLY COMMENDED

Shannon's practical and creative approach to her teaching through a care for the environment is an inspiration to the whole school community. Shannon is an experienced educator with The Nature School, with a strong focus on integrating sustainability throughout the curriculum across all KLAs. Her exemplary work in primary curriculum has seen her selected as part of NESA's Teacher Expert Network providing feedback to school curriculum across the state. A passionate learner, she shares her knowledge about biodiversity, recycling, composting, gardening and beekeeping with the school and local community. She supports an effective school resource management and purchasing program, which prioritises sustainable, ethical, and environmentally conscious choices. Congratulations to Shannon for her Highly Commended Teacher Award and leading the Nature School sustainability journey.

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022

Return & Earn Program Leader of the Year Award



REBECCA HOAD HIGHLY COMMENDED

Rebecca Hoad leads the Return and Earn program at St Ignatius College, Riverview. The program started simple and small – with a bin outside an office and has grown to a program that includes playground bins, collections at Saturday sports, and students collecting containers at home as part of a school community service program. Money from the program is donated to charity, with over 10,000 containers returned this year. Rebecca shares her knowledge with other schools, to help them on their journey.

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022

Sustainability Connect Business of the Year Award



GREENING THE GREEN WINNER

Greening the Green is a project of Clean Up Australia that aims to reduce waste with local sporting clubs. For the last 30 years, Clean Up Australia has been inspiring and empowering communities to clean up, fix up, and conserve our environment. Through the Greening the Green program, sporting clubs create an Action Plan in collaboration with their local council and Clean Up Australia to recycle soft plastics, increase commingled recycling, conduct bin and litter audits, and start collecting for their local Container Deposit Scheme (Return & Earn). Upon completion of the program, clubs are rewarded with outdoor equipment made from recycled plastic – a physical demonstration of the circular economy.

Since 2020, Greening the Green has engaged 74 sporting clubs across 59 local councils. While the project has been delayed by restrictions on local sporting clubs over the last few years, clubs have still collected and recycled a total of 8.65 cubic meters of soft plastic. The program looks to embed long-term sustainable practices and empower clubs to create and implement their own sustainability Action Plans. Greening the Green also aims to improve the community's attitude towards recycling, increase knowledge of soft plastic recycling, and create demand for products that are made with recycled content – creating a pull-through to drive a circular economy.

NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS 2022



Sustainability Connect Business of the Year Award



RECOLLECT HIGHLY COMMENDED

ReCollect supports charities, community groups and schools to benefit from the NSW Container Deposit Scheme. ReCollect makes recycling containers easy, convenient, and transparent. They assist organisations with collection and bottle drives. They also support a Community Partnership program – people can choose to donate their return earnings to worthy community groups, and community groups can register for free to become a community partner. ReCollect is currently involved with over 230 organisations, enabling these groups to have a positive impact on the environment and raise needed funds.

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