NSW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS



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environmental education NEW SOUTH WALES

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Early Childhood Educator of the Year

MARIE ARMSTRONG

LAKE ILLAWARRA ECO HEROES

highly commended

Marie demonstrates environmental leadership by creating opportunities for children, educators and families to move beyond talking about sustainability to take meaningful action together.

Through the Marine Estate Champions Program, she developed the Lake Illawarra Eco Heroes, recognised with the Champion's Choice Award, connecting children with local environments and environmental issues.

Marie supports children and educators to investigate biodiversity, wildlife, waterways and litter, then turns this learning into action through caring for habitats and Country. By sharing resources, engaging families and building educator confidence, Marie teaches sustainability as a way of living, encouraging others to put it into everyday practice.



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Early Childhood Educator of the Year

SHWETA SHWETA

LITTLE FOUNDATIONS EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

winner

Shweta Shweta has embedded sustainability into her teaching practice, making it a meaningful and consistent part of children's everyday learning, routines and environment.

As the service's Sustainability Officer, she provides hands-on experiences such as maintaining a worm farm, developing gardens, exploring the life cycles of flora and fauna, and incorporating natural, recycled and open-ended materials into learning. She has also strengthened the service's sustainability practices by introducing the NSW Return and Earn program, encouraging families to donate recyclable and reusable materials, securing significant donations for the gardens and classrooms, and collaborating with community organisations such as Blacktown City Council and Woolworths.

Through these initiatives, Shweta supports children to develop environmental responsibility, care for living things, investigate sustainability concepts and recognise how their everyday actions can contribute positively to the environment and wider community.

Sustainable Schools NSW
Teacher of the Year

JESSICA AGNELLO

THE NATURE SCHOOL

highly commended

Jessica Agnello integrates environmental responsibility directly into everyday learning and curriculum design. Through initiatives such as utilising recycled materials for educational resources and leading reuse practices such as clothing mending and bicycle repair, she fosters a school-wide culture of sustainability.

Jessica empowers students to become active environmental advocates through nature-based projects and partnerships with local organisations like Landcare. Jessica extends her impact beyond the classroom by sharing her environmental education expertise with fellow educators through regional networks.

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Sustainable Schools NSW
Teacher of the Year

KATHRYN MAMONE

SAPPHIRE COAST ANGLICAN COLLEGE

winner

Kathryn Mamone is transforming sustainability education at Sapphire Coast Anglican College through her school Circularity Hub, where Design & Technology students are practicing circularity, collecting and process recovered plastic into new products. By partnering with local cafes to collect milk bottle lids, she provides raw materials for her students to shred, press, and remanufacture into everyday items.

Beyond the classroom, Kathryn circular economy leadership extends across the region, with collaborative forums for schools and business leaders and supporting education strategies for the National Circularity Centre.
Her approach shifts the focus from simple waste reduction to practical design thinking and regional integration of circular economy principles.

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Return and Earn Program Leader

JAYDEN BUNN

WOOLOOWARE HIGH SCHOOL

winner

As School Captain and Environmental Team President at Woolooware High School, Jayden Bunn has driven systemic sustainability change by establishing a dedicated Environmental Portfolio and implementing campus-wide recycling infrastructure.

Through his leadership in the Return and Earn program, using data generated through waste audits, and installing strategically placed collection crates, he has supporte the school community to see a 75% reduction in container landfill waste over the past 11 months. The funds generated from this initiative directly support student sustainability projects, including a weekly environmental raffle and the expansion of school vegetable patches.

His exceptional advocacy and measurable impact have also earned him the Breen Resources Sustainability Award and a formal commendation in the NSW Parliamentary Hansard.

Return and Earn Program Leader

BETTINA OTTERBECK

CAMMERAY PUBLIC SCHOOL

winner

Over the past two years, Bettina Otterbeck has transformed Cammeray Public School's Return and Earn program from a single borrowed bin into a thriving initiative that has collected approximately 40,000 containers and raised $4,000. Her dedicated weekly collections and termly prize draws, supported by local business partnerships, have deeply engaged students and funded key school projects like a new playground.

Beyond managing the logistics, Bettina has cultivated a broader culture of sustainability by organizing community working bees and piloting reusable cup initiatives. Her exceptional leadership and innovative approach have led to invitations to present the program's success at The Sustainability Hive and to share the model with other local schools.

Emerging Educator of the Year

MATTHEW STEADMAN

PANANIA NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL

highly commended

Matthew Steadman is turning Panania North Public School into a model for environmental education, where students lead sustainability through the Green Team, a bush tucker garden and a wildlife corridor built with collaboration with local government, industry and the Australian Botanic Gardens.

Working with Elders and the local Aboriginal community, as well as the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, he facilitated a whole-school mural project that touched every single student. This project showed Matthew to be a community leader who understands that reconciliation requires depth of process and not simply a lesson, but a lived experience.

Matthew walks alongside others to weave culture, Country and reconciliation into the school grounds to impact everyday learning across the whole school community.

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Emerging Educator of the Year

LEE-ANN GOOGAN

WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL

winner

As the Environmental Education Coordinator for Willoughby City Council, Lee-Ann Googan coordinates over 140 workshops and school activities annually, engaging more than 7,000 participants in sustainable living and nature conservation.

Lee-Ann spearheaded the inaugural Canopy of Life Tree Festival in response to local tree vandalism and launched a highly successful Home Compost Initiative that diverted nearly 2.5 tonnes of food waste from landfill. Lee-Ann developed curriculum-aligned resources for schools and partnered with local public schools to establish active travel programs that significantly reduced peak-hour vehicle trips.

By continually innovating her outreach strategies, including integrating environmental education into local pub trivia nights, she effectively translates environmental awareness into measurable, lasting community action.

Environmental Educator of the Year

DUNCAN MCMASTER

THE SCOTS COLLEGE

highly commended

Duncan McMaster transformed The Scots College's 300-hectare Bannockburn campus from a conventional farm into a verified regenerative "Living Lab" and a space for community education. He established the Bannockburn Rewilding Sanctuary, successfully reintroducing threatened species alongside sustainable beef production.

By collaborating with Jerrinja Traditional Owners to integrate Indigenous knowledge with modern ecological science and partnering with leading industry and research institutions, he has educated over 10,000 visitors.

Duncan's innovative farm model proves that agricultural productivity and biodiversity conservation are symbiotic, creating a replicable blueprint for environmental education and ongoing stewardship.

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Environmental Educator of the Year

KELLY PFEIFFER

NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

winner

As a STEM Enrichment Advisor with the NSW Department of Education, Kelly Pfeiffer has spent nearly a decade transforming project-based environmental education into programs that reach hundreds of thousands of students nationally and internationally.

Kelly has developed impactful initiatives such as Save Our Stripes, Dark Sky, and the Minecraft-based Eco Detectives program, which is now officially embedded in the NSW Stage 3 syllabus.

Bridging the objectives of government, conservation organisations, and universities, Kelly successfully harnesses policy and pedagogy to deliver classroom-ready environmental action. Her systemic leadership empowers students and educators to become active, informed problem-solvers for a sustainable future.

Lifetime Achievement

LINDA TOHVER

NORTH EAST WASTE

winner

For nearly 30 years, Linda has been a passionate and professional environmental educator. Starting as a waste educator at Wollahra Council in the 90's, she then moved on to Resource NSW where she led and supported a diverse team of bilingual educators, working with the NSW Ethnic Communities Council to deliver culturally appropriate sustainability education for communities from 7 key language groups.

Making the move to the north coast, working at North East Waste, Linda works collaboratively across seven regional councils, leading initiatives like FOGO, food waste avoidance and most recently reusable event trials that have diverted nearly 48,000 tonnes of resources and eliminated 37,000 single-use items. Whether she is sharing practical waste tips with 200,000 weekly radio listeners or sharing her resources to educators across the state, she consistently makes sustainability accessible and empowers communities to take real action.

A passionate and collaborative leader, Linda builds networks, shares knowledge and inspires people to see that small everyday actions can create meaningful environmental change and helping regional communities.