

Green Day: Enhancing sustainability education at Merewether High School



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Merewether High School is an academically selective high school located in Newcastle, NSW. The school actively promotes sustainable use of school resources and caring for the environment in the "Going Green" section of the school website.

"Students and staff manage, observe and monitor our school's resources, waste and physical surroundings, then take on activities to protect and improve our school and the local environment." Your child will develop an understanding about:

- the relationship between human activities and natural systems
- sustainable management of the earth's resources
- the inter-related nature of processes in the natural environment

We encourage you to support your child's 'going green' activities, and to help them to learn to care for the environment as part of their everyday lives "

<http://www.merewether-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/our-school/going-green>

Green Day

The Green Day initiative saw sustainability education at Merewether High embedded in whole school practice through a range of fun and interesting activities during different time periods on a single day of the year. The activities are aimed at increasing student conceptual knowledge about sustainability, increasing awareness of how local organisations promote and enhance sustainability in their community and providing ideas for students to take action on sustainability issues.



Right: Electric bike demonstration by Hunter TAFE

Many students at Merewether High are involved in activities related to sustainability such as energy, water and waste audits, recycling, tree planting and enrichment activities such as visits to environmental education centres and guest speakers from environmental organisations promoting sustainability.

Until Green Day was implemented in 2013 by the Social Science faculty there was no coordinated whole school activity providing sustainability education for all students and linking knowledge about sustainability to local organisations and the real world.

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Hamilton Public School garden produce stall

Features of Green Day include:

- **An Environmental Expo** organised by senior Geography students who emailed 30 local environmental groups / organisations inviting them to operate information and /or demonstration stands. Organisations involved in 2013 and / or 2014 included

Hunter Water¹ – sustainable, clean water for Newcastle

Conservation Volunteers² – recruits volunteers for environmental and wildlife conservation projects

Transition Newcastle³ – promoting local sustainability

Take3⁴ – protecting beaches from plastic waste

Tom Farrell Institute Newcastle University⁵ – environmental projects

City of Newcastle – Climate Cam and Waste management

Wetlands Environmental Education Centre

Hunter Region Botanic Gardens – water saving native plant display

Australian Youth Climate Coalition

LandCare

Native Animal Trust – wildlife rescue service

National Parks and Wildlife – biodiversity and habitat protection

Youth Leading the World – social justice

1 Hunter Water – <http://www.hunterwater.com.au>

2 Conservation volunteers – <http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au>

3 Transition Newcastle – <http://www.transitionnewcastle.org.au>

4 Take 3 – <http://www.take3.org.au>

5 Tom Farrell Institute – <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/about-uon/our-university/sustainability/environmental-projects-at-tom-farrell-institute>

Smart Grid Smart City – sustainable energy production

RSPCA – humane chicken farming

Feedback – recycling waste

SD Environmental Management – solutions for businesses



RSPCA representatives present information on sustainable and humane chicken farming



RSPCA information on sustainable and humane chicken farming

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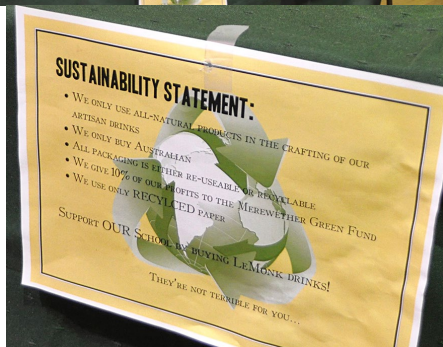


Signing up to participate in action for sustainability.

- **Other local schools** with a commitment to sustainability participated in the expo. Hamilton Public School students displayed and sold produce from their Blue Gate Garden and Lambton High School students displayed a range of sustainability programs running at their school eg. Climate cam and Green concert.
- **Green stalls** – Commerce students developed environmentally friendly businesses selling products such as cakes, drinks, fudge and pizza to students and other visitors on Green Day. Each enterprise required a sustainability statement for display on their stall. A percentage of profits go to the Merewether High School Environment Fund.



Business sustainability statement (right) for the Lemonk enterprise stand



- **Dressing green** – all students were encouraged to dress in green or clothing that demonstrated sustainable fibre and / or clothing production. Selected students participated in a sustainability fashion show.



Students engage with community organisations such as wildlife rescue



Learning about native plants from Hunter Region Botanic Gardens

- **School Environment Fund** – receives fund raising from the day. A suggestion board involves students in proposing ideas to increase sustainability at MHS.
- **Clean Up Australia Day** and **Tree Planting activities** in the grounds of MHS.

The day ran successfully in 2013 and 2014 and is now an annual event on the school calendar, successfully immersing students in informative and practical sustainability education in a day of learning while having fun.

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Learning about Hunter Water

While environmental sustainability forms the focus of Merewether High School's Green Day, students are also presented with thought provoking issues related to environmental, economic and social sustainability such as such as animal cruelty in farming, volunteering, environmental responsibility and social justice.

Typical organisation for Green Day

| Time | Activity |
|------------------------|--|
| Period 1 | Collection of gold coin donation for Green Day dress |
| Period 2 | Commerce businesses set-up |
| Period 3 | Set up Sustainability Expo |
| Period 4 & 5 and lunch | Businesses commence trading. |
| Period 4 & 5 and lunch | Sustainability Expo. |
| Lunch | Fashion Parade |
| Period 6 | Pack –up Businesses & Sustainability Expo |
| Period 6 | Clean up Australia Day activity for Year 7 |
| Period 6 | Tree Planting: Seniors |

Left: Suggestion board for use of MHS Environment Funds



Demonstrating cycle power

