



## 2. Taking action towards a sustainable school

### Concepts

Environmental auditing of the school enables staff and students to identify areas of environmental concern around the school grounds

- ◆ A school environmental management plan helps provide a focus for environmental activities around the school
- ◆ An environmental committee can coordinate the school's environmental activities .

### Sustainable schools

A sustainable school is a place of learning that functions so that resources such as air, water, earth and biodiversity are not degraded. A sustainable school would have a good recycling program, would not produce stormwater pollution and might have a native garden to encourage bird life to the area.

The South Australian State Government is encouraging schools to work towards sustainability, through the Sustainable Schools Program. From 2005 resources from this program will be made available to all schools in South Australia.

The following chapter briefly outlines some organisational tools to help schools work towards sustainability.

The following are important components of a sustainable school:

- ◆ a strong environmental education program
- ◆ a school environmental committee
- ◆ a school environmental management plan
- ◆ yearly environmental audits conducted around the school.

### The school environmental committee

Although a school environmental committee could take on many forms, its role usually includes the following: coordinating school wide environmental audits, collating the results from the audits, deciding on priority actions to improve the school environment and organising and coordinating environmental actions. Students, parents and non teaching staff participation on this committee would assist in making inclusive decisions about the future of the school.

### Environmental auditing in schools

Environmental audits help to identify environmental problems around the school grounds. They can be carried out by students, teachers and other school staff. The auditing process is briefly described in chapter 1, however the main idea of an audit is to walk around the school and survey a range of relevant information. Auditing provides information to the environmental committee so that the schools environmental problems can be tackled in a coordinated manner. Several environmental audit tools are listed in the resources section of this chapter.

### School Environmental Management Plans

There is no standard method of writing a school environmental management plan (SEMP). However, most plans would list some of the school's environmental problems and solutions to these problems. Several examples of school environmental management plans have been included in the resources section of this chapter.

In brief the process of developing a SEMP involves:

- (1) Setting up an environmental committee
- (2) Carrying out an environmental audit on the school to investigate components such as pollution, biodiversity, resource use and waste production.
- (3) Using the audit results to identify environmental problems around the school
- (4) Setting goals for improving the school environment
- (5) Taking action
- (6) Evaluating progress by carrying out annual audits.
- (7) Setting new environmental goals each year based on the latest environmental audit results.

School environmental management planning kits are currently being created by Department of Education and Community Services staff, and will be available from mid 2005.

### Lesson ideas

Your class could carry out an environmental audit of your school. Students could work in groups to investigate separate parts of the school ground. The types of information that students can collect in their audit includes the following:

Biodiversity:

- ◆ Bird species
- ◆ Plant species
- ◆ Bug species



- ♦ Types of frogs
- ♦ Weeds

#### Waste:

- ♦ Where is litter a problem in the school grounds?
- ♦ Can general classroom waste be reduced, reused or recycled?
- ♦ What happens to organic waste produced at the school?

#### School Resources:

- ♦ Are there any leaky taps in the school?
- ♦ Are the school gardens mulched?
- ♦ Are water and energy saving strategies considered when planning works on school grounds and buildings?
- ♦ Are lights turned off when not in use?
- ♦ Are computers switched off when not in use?

## Recommended Resources

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Developing a school environmental management plan (SEMP) an Environmental Resource Program for Students in the middle school years, Minerals Council of Australia, Cost \$22.00

Also available, free 1.5 hour workshops

Contact: Education Program SA chamber of mines and energy:

Ground Floor

4 Greenhill Rd

Wayville 5034

**[www.resourcessa.org.au](http://www.resourcessa.org.au)**

email: [education@resourcessa.org.au](mailto:education@resourcessa.org.au)

ph 8373 9600 fax 8373 9699

**<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/ecotude/index.asp>**

A great resource that explains to students how to walk through their school and conduct an environmental audit. Also allows students to calculate the environmental footprint of their school and to identify ways to reduce the environmental footprint of their school.

**[http://www.millbank-p.schools.nsw.edu.au/our\\_environmental\\_management\\_pla.htm](http://www.millbank-p.schools.nsw.edu.au/our_environmental_management_pla.htm)**

The school environmental management plan for Millbank Public School, NSW

**<http://www.millbank-p.schools.nsw.edu.au/environment%20report.htm>**

Environmental Audit results and action statement for Millbank Public School, NSW

**[http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/yrk12focus\\_areas/enviroed/sempp\\_01\\_05.php](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/yrk12focus_areas/enviroed/sempp_01_05.php)**

The school environmental management plan for Kemblawarra Primary School, NSW.

**<http://www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/enviroed/index.cfm?u=4&i=73>**

This site produced for schools in NSW provides a proforma for an SEMP. This could be used as a guide in the meantime while the South Australian Resources are being developed.

**<http://www.observhill-e.schools.nsw.edu.au/eepolicyindex.htm>**

This website is from an Environmental Education Centre in NSW. The website gives some advice to schools wishing to develop and write an environmental management plan. Advice on carrying out environmental audits is also included with some examples of environmental audit reports from a range of schools.

