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