

Thalgarrah Environmental Education Centre

Annual Report



2018



5680

Introduction

The Annual Report for **2018** is provided to the community of Thalgarrah Environmental Education Centre as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

Matt McKenzie

Principal

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Message from the Principal

2018 was a successful and productive year at Thalgarrah EEC. Our engagement with the local school communities have resulted in 40 different schools and 5652 students being involved with our programs. This has included several new schools in 2018.

We have used casual teachers more often in 2018 to not only deliver teaching programs in a variety of locations but to collaborate around the development of new programs.

In 2018 we went through the External Validation process which was a lot of work in pulling together our evidence but provided valuable insights into what we are doing well and the areas we need to work on from the School Excellence Framework..

I am proud of the experiences that we have provided and would like to thank the teachers, students and school communities that have supported us throughout the year.

School background

School vision statement

Learning for a sustainable future with head, heart and hands.

EZEC Vision

Leading environmental education to empower learners for a sustainable future.

School context

Thalgarrah Environmental Education Centre is one of 25 Environmental Education and Zoo Education Centres supported by the NSW Department of Education.

The centre is located on the site of the former Thalgarrah School, 18km north east of Armidale.

Thalgarrah Environmental Education Centre (TEEC) is a NSW Department of Education school located on the site of the former Thalgarrah School, 18km north east of Armidale.

Our programs aim to inspire young people to experience and connect with the natural world and encourage the development of positive behavioural changes towards its protection.

Our school achieves this through the provision of high quality field work and environmental and sustainability education programs for school students K–12 at excursion locations around Thalgarrah EEC as well as other study sites particularly around Armidale and, at times, within schools.

EZEC Context

The 25 NSW DET Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZECs) are leaders in environmental and sustainability education.

Our centres provide authentic, curriculum-based fieldwork learning experiences enable students to explore, investigate and understand the natural and made environments.

Our programs provide opportunities to understand concepts and systems and develop values that empower learners to become environmentally responsible citizens.

By building strong partnerships and developing teacher capacity, EECs enable schools to integrate sustainability education into all aspects of school operations including curriculum, teaching and learning, physical surroundings and relationships with the local community.

Self-assessment and school achievement

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

This section of the Annual Report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework and participated in an external validation. The framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading. During the external validation process, an independent panel of peer principals considered our evidence and assessment of the school's progress, aligned with the standards articulated in the School Excellence Framework.

The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of **Learning**: Thalgarrah Environmental Education Centre (TEEC) is strongly focused on learning and ongoing performance improvement. Although TEEC has no permanent enrolment there are systems and programs in place that support the wellbeing and individual learning needs of the approximately 6000 students entering our care each year. The teaching and learning programs at TEEC are carefully matched to syllabus documents across Key Learning Areas. TEEC monitors and reviews its provision of learning experiences through feedback from visiting teachers and through pedagogical discussions among TEEC teaching staff and we continue to develop new and innovative programs to meet the diverse needs of students. The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of Learning we are **Delivering**.

The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of **Teaching**: Thalgarrah Environmental Education Centre (TEEC) is committed to identifying and implementing effective teaching practice using a diverse portfolio of programs across many different student groups. Lessons are well planned and collaboratively developed by TEEC teaching staff and other participating teachers and organisations. TEEC teachers are becoming more skilled in the area of providing specific feedback to students supporting student learning. Analysis of data, from student performance as well as Teacher Evaluation forms is analysed to inform future directions. All staff at TEEC demonstrate personal responsibility for maintaining their professional standards as outlined in Performance and Development Plans. TEEC has built a culture of continued improvement and this has been supported through mentoring and coaching procedures. The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of Teaching we are **Sustaining and Growing**.

The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of **Leading**: Thalgarrah Environmental Education Centre (TEEC) displays a culture of high expectations and community engagement. All staff are supported in improving performance leading to a high quality service delivery. TEEC is recognised in the community as excellent provider of unique programs engaging students from all stages. Our service extends to include University research, early childhood teachers and state-wide environmental educators. Resources at TEEC are used strategically to ensure high quality service delivery. This includes the employment of a variety of casual teaching staff as well as non-teaching staff. Our facilities are well maintained and used flexibly depending on the group that is visiting. Technology is used effectively in some of our programs to enhance learning. We are continually asking for school community feedback to improve our service delivery. The results of this process indicated that in the School Excellence Framework domain of Leading we are **Sustaining and Growing**.

Our self-assessment and the external validation process will assist the school to refine our school plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability/sef-evidence-guide>

Strategic Direction 1

Empower Learners

Purpose

To develop students' environmental knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to create environmentally literate citizens.

This is accomplished through providing engaging and stimulating learning programs and by developing the capacity of centre staff and those in our network as learners, teachers and leaders in environmental and sustainability education.

Overall summary of progress

Over 2018 Thalgarrah staff have successfully collaborated to develop new programs in Science and Geography in response to requests from teachers and in line with new syllabus documents. We have begun updating the centre's website to better inform teachers of programs we offer. We have also used feedback forms to garnish opinions of visiting teachers on how our programs are assisting in student learning and how they can be improved.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
New programs developed meet the needs of client schools.	Funds expended were for additional science resources as well as casual staff wages. \$2800	Working scientifically skills are more explicitly addressed in planning and delivery of new programs resulting in positive impact on student learning and a high degree of teacher satisfaction.
Data from teacher and student evaluations reflect positive learning experiences and outcomes for students.	No additional funds were required to create and analyse evaluation forms.	Visiting teachers' responses were always favourable in regards to learning experiences provided by Thalgarrah EEC for their students. " The Stage 3 science program was extremely well organised and all of the students who attended were thoroughly engaged and enjoyed the 'hands-on' activities that were prepared." Year 6 teacher ""the hands on application of their theory is always further developed when given a practical context. Especially with people who know their subject area and are able to adapt to students' needs." Year 11

Next Steps

With syllabus recently changing, there is a need to adapt programs or build new ones to ensure they are still relevant to the work being done in classrooms. This will include fieldwork for the new Stage 6 Investigating Science course in Year 11. We will continue to employ casual teachers to collaborate over the development and delivery of new programs and activities and also strive for improvement through requesting feedback from visiting teachers and their students.

Strategic Direction 2

Strengthen Partnerships

Purpose

To extend and strengthen partnerships with our networks and communities through effective communication and a culture of collaboration. The impact of these relationships drives the provision of authentic, relevant and unique experiences which enable students to be confident and creative environmental citizens.

Overall summary of progress

In 2018 we have continued to partner with other organisation to ensure the programs we offer are of a high standard and include engaging and authentic learning experiences. Thalgarrah staff have attended conferences with other members of the EZEC community sharing ideas. We have also collaborated with locals that have certain expertise that have value-added to the programs that we offer.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
Increased number of partnerships with schools and non-DOE organisations enhancing centre programs.	Funds spent in this area were to allow staff to attend conferences to plan with others.	Thalgarrah staff attended the EZEC Annual Conference as well as the Rural EZEC conference. Thalgarrah teamed up with university personnel to consult on directions of teaching programs, particularly in Stage 6 science subjects.
Partnerships have a positive impact on the quality of the learning experiences for students.	No funds required	University scientists have helped us design and analyse the data for fieldwork activities in senior biology. Thalgarrah staff have value-added to programs hosted by other organisations such as Landcare, Northern Tablelands Orienteering Club and Early Years Nature Connection, NSW.

Next Steps

With such a small teaching staff at Thalgarrah EEC it is imperative that we seek opportunities with others to gain fresh ideas for our programs as they evolve. In 2019 in consultation and collaboration with UNE Education personnel and Armidale Community Preschool we will be providing another Nature Play Conference for Early Childhood practitioners. We will continue to seek the assistance of a variety of practicing scientists for our Stage 3 program and work with UNE scientists on developing new fieldwork opportunities for Stage 6 science students.



Student information

In 2018, 5652 students, from 40 different schools and other educational institutions, utilised the services of Thalgarrah EEC..

Structure of classes

In 2018, we continued to see a lot more primary classes (84%) than secondary.

In the primary section our main visitors were from Stage 3 (27% of total groups) and Early Stage 1 (23).

The time when students visits was much more even than in previous years: Term 1 –26%; Term 2 – 20%; Term 3 – 29%; Term 4 – 25%.

In 2018 18% of our programs were run off-site at either schools or other field study sites such as National Parks.

61% of the groups we saw in 2018 were for one day visits. This is indicative of the growing number of overnight camps we are hosting. Our most common camp is a one night stay with 20% of all visitors.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
Classroom Teacher(s)	0.2
School Administration and Support Staff	1.19

*Full Time Equivalent

In 2017 no person identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander was on Thalgarrah's workforce.

Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

Teacher qualifications

Qualifications	% of staff
Undergraduate degree or diploma	100
Postgraduate degree	0

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

100% of the teaching staff hold current Proficient accreditation.

All staff were involved with professional learning as part of their Professional Development Plans.

In 2018, the School Administrative Manager attended:

SAP Assets and Equipment Processes;

SAP Reports, from a Principal's Perspective;

Enterprise Financial Planning;

e-Emergency Care;

EFPT Training;

School Administrative Managers Network Meeting.

Professional Development for Thalgarrah EEC teaching staff included:

Enterprise Financial Planning;

Annual Environmental & Zoo Education Centre (EZEC) Conference, North Sydney.;

Annual EZEC Principals' Conference, Sydney;

Western EZEC Conference at Dorroughby EEC;

Northern Tablelands Principals Network Meetings;

Armidale Community of Schools meetings;

G.R.A.S.S. Teacher Professional Development at UNE, Armidale;

"Young Scientist Awards Judging " put on by Science Teachers Association of NSW (STANSW) in Sydney;

Incident Management Exercise (IMEX);

Engaging with Scout reports;

Citizen Science – Fieldwork for Scientific Enquiry.

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018.

	2018 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	175,086
Revenue	369,222
Appropriation	294,674
Sale of Goods and Services	740
Grants and Contributions	71,080
Gain and Loss	0
Other Revenue	0
Investment Income	2,728
Expenses	-359,253
Recurrent Expenses	-359,253
Employee Related	-247,973
Operating Expenses	-111,279
Capital Expenses	0
Employee Related	0
Operating Expenses	0
SURPLUS / DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR	9,970
Balance Carried Forward	185,056

The school management team attended financial training on SAP reporting and EfPT budgeting tool in 2018. This allowed for strategic management of school finances and targeted infrastructure spending. The school finances are managed by the School Administrative Manager and the Principal in line with current Department of Education financial management guidelines. Large infrastructure projects in 2018 included a refurbishment of the Camp Kitchen, including new appliances. Also in 2018 we needed to purchase a new washing machine for the laundry and a new scanner to assist with SAP requirements. A new pump system to pump water up from the river was also purchased in 2018.

In 2018 we also spent a little more on casual staffing – both teaching and non-teaching.

Funds carried forward will provision further Kitchen updates and a new shed adjacent to the COLA. We will also be employing additional casual staff, purchasing specialised equipment as required and support professional learning above the allocated amount in the SBAR.

Financial summary equity funding

The equity funding data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' section of the financial summary above.

	2018 Actual (\$)
Base Total	292,058
Base Per Capita	6,961
Base Location	647
Other Base	284,450
Equity Total	0
Equity Aboriginal	0
Equity Socio economic	0
Equity Language	0
Equity Disability	0
Targeted Total	0
Other Total	0
Grand Total	292,058

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

A full copy of the school's financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the parent and/or community groups. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

Thalgarrah Environmental Education Centre gauges school community satisfaction by collecting and analysing student and teacher evaluation forms. In 2018 we were particularly interested in the number of new programs that were requested, planned for and delivered. In 2018 we attempted to gather teacher feedback through Google forms which we effective in delivery and collection but were not completed as much as our paper forms that were given to teachers at the end of the program and collected before they left. Evaluation forms gathered data from teachers on whether the fieldwork supported their class work and whether the activities provided useful opportunities to work on intended syllabus outcomes.

In 2018 we co-ordinated a "Celebration of Science" Day with over 350 students from 10 schools. Teachers were asked to comment on what they liked about the day. Their responses included: "The students were engaged and the activities were very hands-on." , "How a number of schools were involved over the two days in the one location." , "The variety of activities. Great engaging activities. Excellent presenters." , "The event provided an opportunity for our students to participate in a range of age appropriate science activities in a bigger school. The presenters were professional in their delivery of content and clearly communicated with students to maximise engagement. The student passports were a great way for students to reflect on their learning."

Student evaluation forms asked students about what they learnt, their favourite activities and why, and ideas for improvements to the program. This data gives us valuable feedback on our programs and helps to guide improvement of existing and future programs. The overwhelming majority of student surveys indicated that the students enjoyed their time at Thalgarrah, always learnt something and contained very few suggestions for improvements.



Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Thalgarrah EEC has significant Aboriginal sites in its surrounding woodland. These sites form the basis of our Traditional Aboriginal Studies programs at the centre.

Multicultural and anti-racism education

Thalgarrah's principal the appointed Anti –Racism officer and trained as per the training provided by the NSW Department of Education. All programs are targeted at all cultures and programs are regularly adapted for the cultural needs of visiting schools. Thalgarrah EEC has visits from schools that have a varied and diverse cultural base, including newly settled refugee families. All our programs cater to the needs of students and staff from diverse backgrounds. We carefully ensure that all cultural dietary requirements are met while students are on camp.