



Queensland Environmentally Sustainable Schools Initiative (QESSI) Alliance Strategic Plan 2013-2015

Overview

Environmental education for sustainability has a vital role to play in facilitating a lifelong learning process to achieving a sustainable society for Queensland. The Queensland Environmentally Sustainable Schools Initiative (QESSI) Alliance Strategic plan is informed by the declaration of the *United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)* and the *National Environmental Education Statement for Australian Schools – Educating for a Sustainable Future* and the *Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative Partnership Agreement*.

Sustainability is a cross curriculum priority in the Australian curriculum.

Education for sustainability develops the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living. It enables individuals and communities to reflect on ways of interpreting and engaging with the world. Sustainability education is futures-oriented, focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. Actions that support more sustainable patterns of living require consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic systems and their interdependence.

The QESSI Alliance concept supports the implementation of the cross curriculum priority in the Australian curriculum and supports the *Statement on Sustainability for All Queensland Schools – enough for all forever*.

The QESSI Alliance is Queensland's contribution to the **Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI) Partnership Agreement** which was endorsed by all Education and Environment Ministers in 2008.

QESSI Vision:

All Queensland schools to be environmentally sustainable

Aim of QESSI:

To empower staff and students to become active and informed citizens for a sustainable world through a whole of school approach to environmental education for sustainability and by encouraging all schools and their communities in Queensland to become environmentally sustainable.

QESSI Network:

The QESSI Network consists primarily of organisations, **Special Interest Groups**, agencies, school and teachers that receive products and services as clients of the QESSI Alliance member programs.

Role of QESSI:

The role of the **QESSI network** is to:

- disseminate information,
- promote professional development opportunities,
- share case studies of sustainable schools and
- offer advice to the QESSI Alliance members as 'critical friends' through the QESSI Regional Hubs.

QESSI Regional Hubs:

The **QESSI Regional Hubs** act as regional coordinators for the QESSI concept and act as a regional 'one-stop-shop' to support schools on their journey towards being more environmentally sustainable.



QESSI Alliance:

The purpose of the QESSI Alliance is to:

- support a holistic model of environmental education for sustainability to meet current and emerging sustainability challenges
- promote effective education for environmental sustainability programs and resources for schools
- influence related agencies in the area of environmental education for sustainability
- advocate for funding to support the development of sustainable schools across Queensland.

The aim of the QESSI Alliance is to:

- build capacity within each organisation;
- improve quality of service provision to their clients;
- establish a strong professional dialogue with the view for collaboration through building strategic relationships; avoiding duplication of resources where possible; and
- investigate cooperative projects to benefit the vision of the QESSI concept.

Through collaboration, synergies are built, gaining additional benefit. The QESSI Alliance Strategic Plan, creates ongoing dialogue, networking and cooperative action.

QESSI Guiding Principles

The QESSI vision will be achieved by applying guiding principles to the actions and programs to meet the interwoven goals in the Strategic Plan.

These guiding principles include:

- adopting the principles and processes of ecologically sustainable development
- focusing on best practice environmental education for sustainability
- encouraging a collaborative approach
- supporting schools to engage in partnerships with their community
- carrying out knowledge based planning and evaluation seeking to achieve measurable outcomes

Goals and Strategies

Eight key goals promote environmental education for sustainability and underscore the actions to support the development of environmentally sustainable schools.

Goals	Strategies
<i>Encourage schools to be learning organisations for sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage and support the use of school grounds and local areas as outdoor classrooms for environmental education for sustainability • work with schools to build positive relationships between staff, students and communities to establish and support partnerships for sustainability • initiate and encourage an action learning process for schools seeking to achieve environmental sustainability • work with schools/systems to support school buildings and infrastructure being designed and utilised to support environmental education for sustainability
<i>Promote dynamic curricula processes and extra curricula activities based on the principles of education for environmental sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • influence school curriculum frameworks to ensure they embed the cross curriculum priority of sustainability • support the development of school curriculum frameworks that are learner-centred, embrace real-life learning and promote understanding as active and informed citizens for a sustainable world • encourage establishment of environmental groups, activities and projects focused on sustainability • identify opportunities such as special events and school community actions to enhance student learning outcomes
<i>Empower ourselves and others to make the necessary changes for a sustainable society</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and initiate programs for students and staff to support change of attitudes and behaviour related to sustainability • integrate sustainability-based program outcomes with the aim of supporting behavioural change • identify role models, mentors and champions for sustainable schools • identify and promote effective ways to acknowledge leadership, innovation and improvement related to environmental education for sustainability
<i>Encourage and support skilled, committed and aware school staff for sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build 'sustainability' into teacher training courses at universities and other institutions • ongoing development of sustainable schools supported by QESSI Alliance members through sourcing existing 'Train the Trainer' sustainability products • provide professional support to classroom teachers and administrators and other school staff in areas of environmental education for sustainability related sustainability management practices



Create school facilities that demonstrate and support sustainability

- advocate for all new buildings and existing facilities in schools to be designed and constructed on Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) principles and practices
- support the state wide program of energy efficient light retrofitting and solar panels for existing state schools and facilities to meet ESD principles and practices
- identify and support programs that focus on environmentally sustainable food production

Implement sustainable management systems in schools

- encourage the development and implementation of a School Environmental Management Plans (SEMP), or similar plan for each participating school in Queensland
- deliver in-service support to key school staff in development and implementation of the SEMP or similar plan
- aggregate sustainability outcomes of all participating schools for State of Environment Reporting according to national minimum data set for sustainable schools

Improve school resource management, including water, waste, energy, transport and school grounds

- identify and support programs that focus on minimising energy, water and waste by reducing the 'ecological footprint'
- identify and support programs that focus on enhancing biodiversity and connecting students to the values of nature
- promote appropriate programs that encourage healthier forms of human movement to and from schools and facilities

Encourage interlinked schools and local community partnerships for sustainability

- encourage productive partnerships between schools and their communities on key aspects of sustainability
- identify organisations and agencies that can support schools on their path to a more sustainable future
- identify and promote learning opportunities for and within the local communities related to sustainability



Working together

The QESSI Alliance concept is based on working together through focussing on a common vision. Each year a **QESSI Alliance Annual Action Plan** will be developed to support the QESSI Alliance Strategic Plan 2013-2015 at both State and Regional levels by supporting schools to become environmentally sustainable.

The Annual Action Plan will be developed around the terms of reference and protocols for the QESSI Alliance Steering Committee to ensure continual support for the vision. The QESSI Regional Hubs will each develop annual **Regional Action Plans for Sustainability (RAPS)** based on the QESSI Alliance Strategic Plan 2013-2015 and **Regional Investment Strategies (RIS)** which includes the cash and in-kind contribution by regional partners.

Core QESSI Alliance steering committee members will also provide their cash and in-kind contribution through their respective programs to highlight and collect financial support for schools through all the programs.

Reflect and Renew

This process enables us to consider our progress and achievements in relation to others, providing a basis for comparison.

Key steps include:

- evaluating, celebrating and affirming our work together
- reviewing and reporting our progress towards supporting schools to become environmentally sustainable
- learning from the QESSI experience and from others, locally, interstate and internationally
- recognising and adapting to changing circumstances.

Reporting Progress

The QESSI Regional Hubs and QESSI Alliance members will produce annual reports on sustainability outputs, actions and outcomes from each organisation and participating schools. The **QESSI Alliance 2013-2015 Progress Report** will be produced in 2016, based on the aggregated outcomes achieved during the period of this plan.

Evaluation and research opportunities on the QESSI concept will be perused where appropriate.