



## **The Queensland Environmentally Sustainable Schools Initiative (QESSI) Alliance Strategic Plan 2008-2010**

### **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 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*. The QESSI Alliance concept supports the implementation of the *Statement on Sustainability for All Queensland Schools – enough for all forever*.

**Our Vision: All Queensland schools to be environmentally sustainable**

### **The QESSI Alliance Concept**

The Alliance concept aims to empower staff and students to be active and informed citizens for a sustainable world, through a whole school approach to environmental education for sustainability and by encouraging all schools and their communities in Queensland to become environmentally sustainable.

The **QESSI Alliance** is a voluntary cooperative model involving service providers of environmental education for sustainability for schools. Our members include government and non-government and corporate organisations and agencies. QESSI recognises all partners are valued and important. The Alliance model acknowledges that involvement can change from time to time. Members of the QESSI Alliance can participate according to the nature of their organisations and current priorities.

The role of the **QESSI network** is to disseminate information, participate in professional development activities, share case studies of sustainable schools and offer advice to the QESSI Alliance members as 'critical friends'. A 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. The **QESSI Regional Hubs** act as a regional coordinators for the QESSI concept and act as a local 'one-stop-shop' to support schools on their journey towards being more environmentally sustainable.

### **Our Purpose**

Our Alliance works together to support an holistic model of environmental education for sustainability to meet current and emerging sustainability challenges.

The Alliance promotes effective environmental education for sustainability programs and resources for schools. It also influences related agencies in the area of environmental education for sustainability, and advocates for funding to support the development of sustainable schools across Queensland.

The QESSI Alliance has the objective of building capacity within each organisation; improving quality of service provision to their clients; establishing a strong professional dialogue with the view for collaboration through building strategic relationships; avoiding duplication of resources where possible; and investigating cooperative projects to benefit the vision of the QESSI concept. Through this collaboration we can build synergies, gaining additional benefit and progress by working together. This process, through our QESSI Alliance Strategic Plan, is proposed to create ongoing dialogue, networking and cooperative action.

## Our Guiding Principles

We believe our vision will be achieved by applying these guiding principles to our actions and programs to meet the interwoven goals in our Strategic Plan.

- 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

There are eight key goals that promote integrated environmental education for sustainability and underscore the actions to support the development of environmentally sustainable schools.

Goals	Strategies
<b><i>Encouraging schools to be learning organisations for sustainability</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourage and support the use of school grounds and local areas as outdoor classrooms for environmental education for sustainability</li> <li>• work with schools/systems to support school buildings and infrastructure being designed and utilised to support environmental education for sustainability</li> <li>• work with schools to build positive relationships between staff, students and communities to establish and support partnerships for sustainability</li> <li>• initiate and encourage an action learning process for schools seeking to achieve environmental sustainability</li> </ul>
<b><i>Promoting dynamic curricula process and extra curricula activities based on the principles of environmental education for sustainability</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• influence school curriculum frameworks to ensure they reflect and promote environmental education for sustainability</li> <li>• support the development of school curriculum frameworks that are student learner centred and embrace real life learning as active and informed citizens for a sustainable world</li> <li>• encourage establishment of environmental groups, activities and projects focused on sustainability</li> <li>• identify opportunities such as special events and school community actions to enhance student learning outcomes</li> </ul>
<b><i>Empowering ourselves and others to make the necessary changes for a sustainable society</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify and initiate programs for students and staff to support change of attitudes and behaviour related to sustainability</li> <li>• integrate sustainability based program outcomes with the aim of supporting behavioural change</li> <li>• identify role models, mentors and champions for the sustainable schools</li> <li>• identify and promote effective ways to acknowledge leadership, innovation and improvement related to environmental education for sustainability</li> </ul>



***Encouraging and supporting skilled, committed and aware school staff for sustainability***

- 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

***Creating 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

***Implementing 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 SEM or similar plan
- aggregate sustainability outcomes of all participating schools for State of Environment Reporting according to national minimum data set for sustainable schools

***Improving 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

***Encouraging 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



## **Building on our achievements**

As published in the State of Environment - Queensland 2007 report, the QESSI Alliance has been a showcase of the adoption of sustainability practices across Queensland schools. There have been economic benefits through more efficient use of their resources with one school demonstrating a reduction of more than 40% in energy consumption and other schools undertaking water-efficiency initiatives that have created significant saving for schools as well as biodiversity improvements in school grounds. Through the alliance approach there have been awards and grants for schools and strategic partnerships formed across the state which demonstrate the success of the QESSI concept.

## **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 2008-2010 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 2008-2010 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**

It is important for us to take the time to reflect on the journey of the QESSI Alliance. We can celebrate achievements and identify where improvements are required. We have undertaken a review of the progress of QESSI Strategic Plan 2005-2007 and incorporated the learning's into the current Strategic Plan.

This process also enables us to consider our progress and achievements in relation to others, providing a basis for comparison. We can identify other beneficial ways and means to move forward, adapting and adjusting our approach, planning and relationships. It is important to involve our members in this process of reflecting and renewing.

### **Key steps include:**

- evaluating, celebrating and affirming our work together
- reviewing and reporting our progress towards supporting schools to become environmentally sustainable
- learning from our 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 also produce annual reports on sustainability outputs, actions and outcomes from each organisation and participating schools. The **QESSI Alliance 2008-2010 Progress Report** will be produced in 2011, 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.