

Expanding beyond AuSSI to do further sustainability initiatives

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WE ARE PLEASED TO FEATURE one of the 2009 Most Significant Change Stories written by a research team from RMIT University lead by long term friend of VAEE, Dr Jose Roberto Guevara. Each year the RMIT team engage in conversations with some of the schools sponsored by Sustainability Victoria to undertake the Core and Waste modules of ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic.

Most Significant Change (MSC) is a qualitative evaluation methodology particularly suited to understanding the impacts in complex participatory projects with diverse outcomes and multiple stakeholders - and what could be more complex than a school community? This story from Frankston High School gives us a glimpse of the richness and breadth of action, change and learning that the Core and Waste modules have opened up for teachers, students, parents and the surrounding community. It is evident that this project for sustainability is delivering so much more to the school and surrounding community.

If you are interested in learning more about this form of evaluation you may like to look at this site: <http://www.clearhorizon.com.au/flagship-techniques/most-significant-change/>.

Frankston High is a large secondary school with two campuses, 1700 students and over 150 staff. They completed five modules (core, waste, energy, water and biodiversity) in 2009. They were also the 2009 winner of the Water Smart School of the Year. Their story is one of partnerships, influencing the community and moving beyond the AuSSI framework to do further sustainability initiatives.

Background involvement with sustainability

Georgia is a science specialist teacher who took on the sustainability coordinator position in Term 4 2008. She is provided with 3 periods per week, which helps but is not enough time to do what is needed. When she started sustainability was not a priority within the school, but now it is. The Principal and Assistant Principal support it as do a range of interested teachers who have formed a staff environment team that meets once a term. These teachers are enthusiastic to embed sustainability into their curriculums.

Frankston High has a strong student led sustainability committee. In late 2008 they developed workshops on energy, water and waste which they presented to year 8 students. The workshops involve Microsoft Power Point slides designed to challenge thinking, games to make it fun, and a quiz to test what the students remember. In 2009 they adapted the workshops and delivered them to grade 4 students at Derinya Primary School. This was successful so they will be doing it again in 2010 and expanding delivery

to other primary schools. They will also run the workshops at the Melbourne Water Youth Conference. A sub-committee of students want to develop another workshop focussed on animal protection.

A lot of work has been done on biodiversity at Frankston High. Students have worked with Kim, the Frankston Council's Indigenous Nursery Officer, to identify existing indigenous plants at the school. She showed them how to collect seeds and propagate plants. The Nursery also donated 100 trees, while Oz Grow donated organic fertiliser. Students undertaking VCAL and environment classes are doing weed control and removing any water guzzling plants from the school grounds. The aim is to attract native wildlife back into the school grounds by reintroducing plants



Frankston High School students developed workshops on energy, waste and water for Year 8 students.

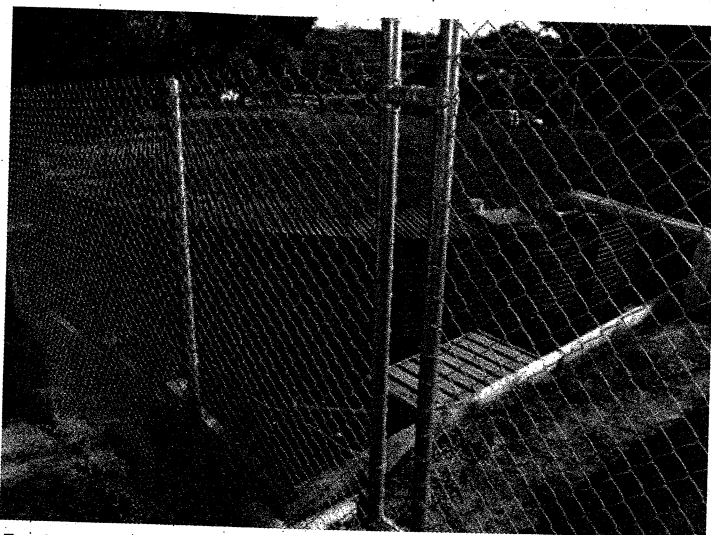
that provide them with shelter and a food source. The VCAL students have also built plant boxes and vegetable garden beds. They are mentoring the year 8 students in the gardens.

Frankston High is a silver 'Water Live It Learn It' school with activities embedded into the curriculum. The school has a 200,000 litre water tank on the junior campus which is used for flushing toilets and a second tank on the senior campus for watering gardens. They have a smart meter installed which enables them to see their water usage real time on a website. This led to the discovery of a burst pipe that was leaking deep in the ground under one of the school buildings. It may have remained undetected for a long time if it hadn't been for the data monitoring which revealed an unexplained spike in water usage. Georga is now working with South East Water to develop ways to use the data from the smart meter with students.

There are many examples of behaviour and attitude change within the school. Initially compost bins in the staffrooms were relatively empty, now they're full. The administration team no longer use the lights in the office (during summer) and they do double-sided printing. They have also designed an online booking system for parent-teacher interviews. No forms were sent home this year – all bookings were done online by parents or teachers. Georga used to get little response from staff when she emailed them or asked for suggestions, now she gets lots of emails from staff wanting to discuss ideas and projects. Likewise she is now being contacted by outside agencies asking if the school would like to participate in various sustainability activities. Sustainability is clearly a priority to the students now too – a brother and sister went on the television show 'Whiz Kids Who Wants To Be A Millionaire'. As a part of the selection process they were asked what they would spend the money on if they won. Out of all the things the students could have said, they said they would spend it on sustainability initiatives at the school.

Frankston High is reaching out to influence community practices. They are promoting free home sustainability audits in an initiative with Green Return. For every household that participates the school is given \$20. The school has advertised the audits availability in newsletters, on the school website, on posters at the office and at parent-teacher interview nights. So far 30 households have had sustainability audits conducted. So have a lot of staff.

Georga participates in the sustainable school network meetings organised by the Frankston Council. These meetings are held once a term at a different school so that they can see what each other are doing. They also do workshops and discuss ideas or concerns that the different teachers / sustainability coordinators are having.



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ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic experience

Georga said that in her first six months she was mostly doing paperwork. She said that without AuSSI there wouldn't have been any direction for their efforts. It helped the school focus on where they wanted to go, what they wanted to achieve. Georga used their 2008 data as the baseline for SETS and said it's really useful. She said that Eric, her AuSSI facilitator, was really helpful providing her with ideas and support.

She said that most of the AuSSI program worked, however, some activities were clearly designed for primary schools and harder to implement in secondary schools. For instance the Rubbish Free Days were hard to implement as year 9 students do not have a home room. They eat outside making it hard to enforce. She said it would be good if there was information included in the AuSSI materials about how to modify activities to suit secondary schools or activities designed specifically for them.

Georga said that if it hadn't have been for AuSSI she wouldn't have known about green procurement. The school's business manager has embraced it, but wanted products that were green and cost effective. Georga felt it would be beneficial if there was either a list of suppliers or advice on how to find appropriate suppliers for green procurement included in the AuSSI materials. This would make it quicker and easier for the Business Managers instead of each school having to do the research.

Georga is in the process of completing the paper work to get accreditation for the community module. Then AuSSI is completed. That isn't the end of the sustainability journey however as the school plans to branch out into other activities. For instance in second and third term 2010 Frankston High will participate in the Council's Climate Change Challenge. Students will complete their carbon footprint and aim to reduce it at home and at school. This has been built into the curriculum for year 8 students and the other year levels can participate voluntarily.