

M E D I A R E L E A S E

Back to school! Littering is not cool!

RENEW NSW educates school students on sustainable litter practices through innovative waste management programs

With back to school time for students across NSW, there's the need to address the concerning reality that schools are one of the most common places to generate large quantities of waste on a constant scale. Despite the environmentally conscious era we live in, almost 80% of school students litter *often* or at least *sometimes*, which means waste is an ongoing problem to our environment!

In attempts to 'attack' this major source of waste and educate students on sustainable waste management practices within schools, many regional groups within **RENEW NSW** (the statewide voluntary initiative focused on improving waste management services for rural and regional NSW), have developed innovative waste management programs based on 'Waste Free' lunches and other ways to make students think about the effects of littering in their community.

An extremely effective program that focuses on young school children and is still gaining momentum 3 years later, is the 'Kindy Kits' program, conducted by The Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils (REROC) which covers 13 local councils including Cootamundra, Tumut and Wagga Wagga.



1. Kindy Kits in the REROC Region

At the beginning of each school year, Representatives from REROC produce and distribute to all kindergarten students a library bag made from non-woven recyclable materials, which contains a brochure on how to pack 'Waste Free' lunches, a 'Recycle Roo' fridge magnet with "5 quick tips", and hints for parents when doing the weekly groceries. This year REROC has distributed over 2,200 bags to students across the region, and each year "students and teachers look forward to doing their bit for the environment when the bags arrive," says Tracey Cornell, REROC Waste Forum Coordinator.

The 'Waste Free' lunches concept is also promoted throughout the educational programs conducted by The North East Waste Forum, which covers areas such as Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Clarence Valley Shire and Richmond Valley. One such project is 'The Green House', which is a waste avoidance education unit that travels to schools and community events with performing artists, who provide a fun and interactive show on waste avoidance and resource recovery.



2. Learning about waste avoidance is fun with The North East Waste Forum Cont/...



A real 'grassroots' approach to attitudinal change when it comes to food litter in schools is conducted by the Netwaste region, which covers the central and western areas of NSW, representing over one third of the state. Taking the 'Waste Free' lunches concept to the next level, Netwaste representatives organise simulated trips with students to the supermarket, emphasizing how the 'simple' grocery choices they make can drastically effect the amount of waste they produce.

However, despite these hands-on and innovative methods to preserve the environment, according to Sue Clarke, Netwaste Environmental Learning Adviser, many students do not fully understand the concept of sustainability and teachers are finding it "a challenge to teach as it's such a broad issue that needs to be related to everyday lives so students find it more meaningful." In response, Netwaste developed a DVD resource with high school students at Broken Hill to support schools to teach sustainability. The DVD was scripted, acted and edited by the students who played a major role in its development. The DVD and set of 5 posters are now used by schools throughout the Netwaste region.

What is testament to 'what we put into our environment, is what we get back out of it' is the silver lining of a similar project run by The Northern Inland Regional Waste group, which covers over 13 local government councils across the New England and North West of NSW. The 'Reel Waste' Competition requires secondary school students to develop a 30 second television advertisement aimed at raising awareness on waste reduction. The winning entry then receives \$3000 worth of prizes to enhance the school's media and arts equipment, and is produced professionally by Prime TV and aired on regional television.

So why do students litter? Looking into litter and waste habits in schools it was found the main reasons why students littered was: insufficient bins, laziness and lack of motivation not to. It was also found that despite various students' concerns for the environment, this had little effect on their tendency to litter.

The programs conducted by the regions within RENEW NSW not only raise awareness on the environmental effects of this littering, but encourage attitudinal change in fun, proactive ways where students can really make a difference. And as these innovative programs generate force, some now being in their second and third year in over 60 rural and regional towns and cities spanning from Broken Hill to Byron Bay and down to southern NSW, RENEW NSW continues to make its environmental stamp on today's youth, and ultimately, tomorrow's leaders.

Top Tips on how to make your food 'nude':

- Buy fruit and vegetables loose instead of pre-packed in plastic
- Put juice or water in a reusable drink bottle
- Use an airtight container for your sandwiches (no need to wrap)
- Buy in bulk and use a recyclable container for snacks
- Take reusable shopping bags to the supermarket
- Make homemade ice blocks instead of purchased ones with wrapping

Interviews are available with –

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