

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

RENEW NSW – preparing children for the future

Hands on, interactive, innovative and entertaining are the key ingredients for **RENEW NSW** (the waste management experts focussed on improving waste management in NSW) when teaching children about the environment. Children, who make up 20% of the population, are our future and to ensure that they will have a healthy environment to grow up in, it is important they are taught the importance of eco-friendly waste practices now!



Evans Head childcare service
visiting the landfill site

From worm farms to trips to the local landfills, these are just two of the ways in which **RENEW NSW** are teaching kindergarten students about resource recovery. The North East Waste Forum (one of eight groups within RENEW NSW and represents the North East region of NSW including Byron Bay and Ballina) has initiated the innovative Early Childhood Waste Wise Education Project. Children as young as 4 and 5, as well as parents and Early Childhood Service staff are being encouraged to reduce their waste and chemical use at the centre through simple waste reduction strategies and techniques. "It's easy to talk about how to reduce waste in the classroom, but by using the worm farm to process the children's food scraps they can see, smell and really experience the process of turning waste into a resource," said Gordon Fraser-Quick, NEWF Coordinator.



Recycle Roo is the exciting initiative of the Riverina Eastern Regional Organisations of Councils (REROC) Waste Forum. Representing the Eastern Riverina region (including Cootamundra, Gundagai and Wagga Wagga regions) REROC is setting the scene for teachers to discuss with Kindergarten students ways in which simple changes can reduce the generation of waste at school and at home to help the environment. During the first week of the new school year, kindergarten students are presented with an exciting gift of a recyclable library bag which displays the Recycle Roo logo and contains stickers, book marks and fun and interactive colouring-in sheets where Recycle Roo explains the reduce, reuse and recycle message in basic terms for the children to understand.

Tackling the more in depth environmental issues NEWF and the Northern Inland Regional Waste group (NIRW, which represents the New England and North West of NSW) work with High School students to teach them how to be more environmentally responsible at school and home.

Over 120 students and teachers from High Schools across the North East region of NSW band together over two days to participate in four interactive auditing workshops at the Students Using Sustainable Strategies (SUSS) Forum. Peer to peer learning is utilised at the forum to create a more successful and interactive learning environment. Ecodrama, creating an organic garden and learning about composting is all in a days work for the students and teachers participating in the forum. With sustainability the main focus, students and teachers participate in a wide range of workshops dealing with waste, water, energy, biodiversity, climate change and Aboriginal cultural heritage. With all the information learnt at the 2 day forum, students are well prepared with the relevant skills, information and networking opportunities to assist in the successful development and implementation of their School Environment Management Plan.

As a direct result of the forum 48% of participants have developed waste management action plans which

include recycling and composting. Further evaluation of the SUSS Forum showed it was successful in increasing awareness and skills in implementation of environmental practices at school and in creating networks and discussions between schools themselves.

Sponsoring the NSW Youth Environment Conference is the NIRW's way of assisting in the education of school children. Being held in the heart of the NIRW region, Tamworth, on 17-18th November 2008, the conference provides hands on, student-centred learning to bring about cultural change in the way the students perceive their natural environment. The themes of 'River' and 'Ocean' are the basis of the presentations and workshops in which the students create and present to each other. From this conference, students learn how to be active, effective citizens and advocates for a sustainable future. "NIRW are supporting the NSW Youth Environment Conference because it is an excellent opportunity to work together with other organisations to increase awareness of environmental issues & promote discussion and action among young people in the region," said Kate Newlan, NIRW Program Coordinator.



Students participating in the Central West School Farm Planning Program.

Teaching high school students a holistic approach to farms is the task NetWaste (which represents the Central West of NSW including Dubbo, Broken Hill, Bathurst and the Blue Mountains) has taken on board. After winning a Forging Partnerships Program grant from the Natural Resources Advisory Council, NetWaste joined forces with the Central West Catchment Management Authority to provide students with an additional workshop in the Central West School Farming Planning Program. This workshop teaches students how to set up alternative systems such as large scale vermi-composting and innovative and holistic design elements such as multifunctional species and observation systems.

Students are encouraged to consider the reduction of external synthetic inputs and increase internal/local natural inputs. An Eco-Kit is given to the students to support their learning and to encourage them to implement the systems learnt at school and at home. From the information learnt during the workshops students develop a farm plan which is entered into the Central West CMA School Farm Planning competition. Following great success this year, the program will be heading to Orange and Bathurst regions later this year.

RENEW NSW is teaching students throughout rural and regional NSW effective eco-friendly practices which can easily be introduced at home, ensuring that these practices become second nature to the students and their families and help improve the health of our environment.

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Further information on **RENEW NSW** can be found on their website: www.renewnsw.com.au.

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