

# KREATIVE KOALAS CASE STUDY

HILL TOP PUBLIC SCHOOL USES KREATIVE KOALAS AS A CATALYST TO REPORT ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY



Hill Top Public School, in the NSW Southern Highlands, has found participation in the Kreative Koalas program to be the catalyst towards a revolution in how education is reported to parents of students; and in doing so is normalising the topic of sustainability in homes and communities.

[The Australian Curriculum](#) currently incorporates three cross-curriculum priorities to support relevant, contemporary and engaging education for students. These priorities are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture
- Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia
- Education for Sustainability

*"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."* Source: [Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority \(ACARA\)](#)

While the priorities are designed to complement standard curriculum such as Maths and English, they are not stand-alone learning areas, and as such are not required to be reported on. Hill Top Public School is about to change that. Principal Mark Gardiner explains why:

*"We are committed to sustainability education as all humans have a vested interest in sustainability. So much of what we want to do with sustainability crosses all curriculum areas and we're trying to change the way we do business by reporting that to parents. It's a pretty simple thing to do and it also embeds sustainability in the minds of the parents and in the community. My conversations with our parents tell me that most parents do understand environmental issues and sustainability are important; and this puts it in the forefront of their mind. It's a bit of a bold new venture that we're undertaking, and Kreative Koalas has been the seed that's started this idea."*



Fifteen students from Years 5 and 6 are directly involved with the school's Kreative Koala project, which has been generously supported by the St Vincent de Paul Society, with a focus on Sustainable Development Goals 7 (affordable and clean energy) and 13 (climate action). Lead teachers for the project are Suzanne Capps and Sharon Doust.

Together students and teachers have connected with a range of community and business initiatives to enhance their Kreative Koala experience. They have learned about carbon sequestration and its impact on sustainability from Climate Friendly, formed a relationship with the local Indigenous community to develop an understanding of ancient fire-practice habits and native food gardens, engaged with the arts and science departments at Bowral High School, and are involved with a sustainability project with Wingecarribee Council, which Suzanne sees as a critical component.

*"Project Sustainable Us is a storytelling collaborative from Wingecarribee Shire Council and Artiste Films. They're making a series of short documentaries based on sustainability in the community, and we have four student leaders working on individual movies. Xavier is doing a presentation on climate change in our community, Oliver is doing the science of climate*

*change, Amelia is looking at what climate change means for her generation and Mikayla is looking at the politics of climate change,"* Suzanne says.

Sharon is the dedicated sustainability teacher at Hill Top and is helping students develop and execute three action plans for:

- Sustainable practices for the school and the garden
- Energy
- Climate action

The sustainability team is enlisting the local Indigenous community and the Hill Top Community Association to develop the kitchen garden, the school's P&C and Cecilia Kemp from Wingecarribee Shire Council to discuss energy action, and the school's literacy program will build up knowledge of communications to promote climate change through appropriate channels.

*"We see this action plan as a long-term project and the Koala has been our springboard to diversify learning in meaningful ways,"* says Suzanne Capps, Assistant Principal.

While all schools involved in Kreative Koalas experience similar learning and engagement with the project it is Hill Top Public School's commitment

to report on their sustainability findings that gives them a point of difference and illustrates the power of Kreative Koalas to make real-world change.

Sue Martin is the president of the NSW Chapter of the [Australian Association for Environmental Education](#) and congratulates the school for their approach:

*"Prioritising sustainability is recognition that as teachers, parents and a community we all work to ensure our children and students have bright futures. Our students live in an era of many challenges to the complex environmental systems that provide support for all life on our planet. Reporting on sustainability gives teachers the opportunity to embed sustainable practices in their everyday teaching. What becomes the norm at school, becomes the norm at home and becomes the norm for students throughout their lifetime."*

In 2019 the school and community of Hill Top were impacted by devastating bushfires. With support from St Vincent de Paul, and their renewed focus on the school garden, energy issues and climate action, students will heal and re-grow and take the community along with them on their sustainability journey whilst helping to create informed global citizens.