

Youth Environment Council South Australia



ANNUAL REPORT
2019



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1.0 Executive Summary

The Youth Environment Council (YEC) has now been running for 22 years, providing young South Australians interested in improving the environment with a suite of life-long skills and a space to develop their enthusiasm. The program is geared towards giving YEC members a greater understanding of sustainability; how it applies to their lives and the issues that face society. It also aims to empower young people by showing them that their voices are not only valued, but are far more powerful when they work with others to make a difference. In addition, YEC members develop skills in social entrepreneurialism.



Students take part in a year-long program to help them implement action projects within their schools or communities. To support them in this they are led through a series of activities which challenge them to think about how they can improve sustainability in a broad context. Over the course of the program the students develop their skills as powerful learners who are able to make decisions, solve problems, communicate their messages and collaborate with others. This enables them to build and develop planning and organisational skills, teamwork, public speaking, personal responsibility and social skills. They also come into contact and create friendships with new people holding similar passions, leading to a boost in their confidence and self-belief.

The Australian Curriculum is strongly woven through the YEC program.

This has resulted in a strong program that contributes to the goals set out in the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The goals declare that young people should be supported to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

The Department for Education (DfE) and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board (AMLR NRMB) recognise the value of authentic student voice. Student voice empowers young people and provides them with the skills, curiosity and creativity to take action for the environment and to live more sustainable lifestyles.

It is important for these students to understand that they don't have to wait until adulthood to be a leader in their community. As part of a network of skilled, confident, like-minded students, they are equipped to tackle environmental and sustainability challenges today.

2.0 Background

Since 1997 the YEC has provided a forum for young people to voice their concerns about key environmental issues facing South Australia and it has given them opportunities to take action towards a more environmentally sustainable future for SA.

The YEC is a joint initiative of DfE and the NRM Education program of the AMLR NRMB. NRM Education values young people as equal partners and active participants in making decisions that affect their lives. NRM Education also has a program dedicated to strengthening student voice within schools and the community, as well as providing access to authentic learning opportunities as part of its commitment to Education for Sustainability and the implementation of the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative in SA (AuSSI-SA).

3.0 YEC Aims

The Youth Environment Council of SA aims to:

- develop skills such as leadership, team work and public speaking
- raise youth awareness and encourage involvement in our environment
- empower youth to take action on sustainability issues and lead sustainable lifestyles
- ensure students see themselves as active citizens today and not just "leaders of tomorrow"
- develop a network of youth sustainability leaders
- enable students to share sustainability ideas and actions.



4.0 How YEC aligns with partner targets and priorities

The Youth Environment Council's outcomes align with the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Plan 2014-15 to 2023-24, DfE priorities and the Australian Curriculum.

4.1 Natural Resources - Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Key Targets

The vision of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board is *Thriving communities caring for our hills, plains and seas.*

To align with this NRM Education works to develop the capacity of the community with a focus on schools, by *"supporting school sustainability initiatives and their opportunities to extend education to their connected communities"*.

This will help to ensure that the community is:

- living within resource limits
- informed and engaged in actively protecting and restoring our natural resources.

The Youth Environment Council has been very effective in developing young engaged leaders who are advocates for sustainability, communicate strong messages to their wider communities, and are involved in taking action.



4.2 Department for Education Priorities

The YEC program adopts best practice pedagogy through the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) Framework. This involves:

- encouraging students to voice their passion and concerns for sustainability and the environment (2.1 Develop democratic relationships)
- students sharing what they have learnt and experienced in varied modes: displays; speeches; newsletter articles and workshops (2.2 Building a community of learners; 4.4 Communicate learning in multiple modes)
- expecting students to drive their own learning around a sustainability or environmental topic of their interest, with staff support when needed (3.1 Teach students how to learn)
- students skilfully solving problems and being proactive in new situations (3.2 Foster deep understanding and skilful action)
- recognising and building upon students' prior knowledge about projects, their community and sustainability (4.1 Build on learners' understandings)
- encouraging students to participate in the community by joining local groups, advocating for change and getting involved in local on-ground projects (4.2 Connect learning to students' lives and aspirations)
- students applying their learning in real world contexts by taking action to support a positive change for our world (4.3 Apply and assess learning in authentic contexts).

As a result, NRM Education has different approaches to engage with young learners catering for all learning styles and challenging the students to think about the sustainability issues that face society and their local community. The program builds resilience by helping members to explore potential solutions and/or actions. There is also a strong focus on engaging others in developing more sustainable lifestyles, with the philosophy that we are a far more powerful force when we work with and hear the voices of others. As a result, YEC students develop valuable skills to become active global citizens.

4.3 Links to the Australian Curriculum

Sustainability is one of the three cross-curriculum priorities in the Australian Curriculum, and the focus of the YEC program. If YEC students are to take ownership of the sustainability issues they are researching they must have a deep understanding of how these issues apply to them and their local environs. As a result, the YEC program content is developed in collaboration with YEC mentors (see section 5.2) to ensure activities provide skills development and are engaging and relevant for the whole YEC audience

The Youth Environment Council creates opportunities for student empowerment as students design and direct their own learning through a community-based project.



The skills and knowledge that students are exposed to through the YEC are aligned to six of the seven general capabilities (as outlined below) and strongly associated with the subject areas of Geography, Biology, Health and Physical Education, and Civics and Citizenship.

The cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures is also emphasised through the YEC experience and incorporated into several areas of the program.



Literacy:

Students undertake a range of literacy-based tasks and take charge of their own learning. They identify an issue of interest to them and undertake research, analysis and development of a project. Students often challenge themselves to gather information from professional sources, thereby developing oral and written communication skills, which require them to explain, justify and deepen their understanding of their chosen issue. YEC members present their findings and outcomes to their peers, teachers, parents and NRM Education staff, justifying their findings and reflecting on their learning experience.

Learning Area Links: Civics and Citizenship (ACHCS055), (ACHCS084); Geography (ACHGS061), (ACHGS071)

Information and communication technology:

The online discussion forum challenges members' skills in accessing online communication tools and allows them to keep in touch between face-to-face events. The forum is interactive and multi-modal, enabling students to take responsibility for and control of how they interact with the group during the year. Members are encouraged to develop their discussion skills, using the forum to pose questions and share their project research and progress. They are also encouraged to use email to communicate with each other throughout the year. Some students also choose to produce websites, make films/videos, and produce online surveys for their project. Many students choose to use both new and traditional models of technology when developing their project and obtain research material through various sources.

Learning Area links: Civics and Citizenship (ACHCS085); Geography (ACHGS061)

Critical and creative thinking:

YEC members undertake a major project that requires them to identify an issue they are passionate about, take action within their community, and present the outcomes to an audience. The students develop creative solutions and challenge traditional processes to arrive at a solution. They are deliberately exposed to challenging scenarios and situations that require a creative solution, in order to develop confidence in their ability to create, adapt and think logically about an issue. During this process they are exposed to outdoor learning experiences that require them to communicate and work cohesively as a team.



Learning Area links: Civics and Citizenship (ACHCS057), (ACHCS055), (ACHCS085); English (ACELY1720); Health and Physical Education (ACPPS079), (ACPM105); Geography (ACHGS061)

Personal and social capacity:

The focus of the YEC experience is to empower students with skills and strategies to lead change within their local community. They learn that in order to be successful many projects require participants to have skills in leadership, negotiation, collaboration and perseverance. A three-day outdoor camp allows them to share experiences and to develop new and healthy relationships with students they may not otherwise meet in their normal lives. Members are encouraged to apply to be a student mentor in the following year, taking an active role in leading activities, modelling responsible and respectful behaviours, and providing feedback to students and staff.



Learning Area links: Health and Physical Education (ACPMP086), (ACPPS079), (ACPMP105); Science (ACSHE120); Civics and Citizenship (ACHCS057), (ACHCS085)

Ethical understanding:

Members examine their values and attitudes, justify their opinions with evidence, and reflect on the rights of individuals and the responsibilities of society. They discuss and debate differing opinions amongst themselves, learning to listen and respect opinions that differ to their own. The concept of sustainability – balancing the needs of society, the economy and the environment - are presented through a number of tasks. The individual projects allow students to research a topic in greater detail in order to understand the complexity of an issue. They are then asked to justify and support their views with research and challenged to present their findings to their peers and invited guests.

Learning Area links: Geography (ACHGK051), (ACHGK052), (ACHGK070); Civics and Citizenship (ACHCS057); English (ACELY1720); Science (ACSSU116); Health and Physical Education (ACPPS093)

Intercultural understanding:

YEC members can come from anywhere in South Australia, representing rural and urban environments and a variety of backgrounds. Therefore, members may be exposed to people who live quite different lifestyles to themselves and who may express very different opinions. As a result, the students have the good fortune to be introduced to people they may not have had the opportunity to meet in their normal social life. Members learn that they are citizens of the world with the power to create change locally by connecting with local issues and examining the role of communities in creating change. In 2019, students were delighted to hear from an Aboriginal educator and learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and connections to the local environment.



Learning Area links: Health and Physical Education (ACPPS093), (ACPMP086), (ACPPS079); Civics and Citizenship (ACHCS057); Geography (ACHGK065)

5.0 Membership in 2019

This year 60 students in Years 7 to 10 from 40 schools across South Australia were chosen to be members of the YEC (four of whom were mentors selected from the previous year). Unfortunately, some members had to pull out during the year but the remaining students represented the voices of young people from schools across South Australia. They represented the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges, SA Murray Darling Basin, Kangaroo Island, Eyre Peninsula and the South East regions. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of representation from these NRM regions.

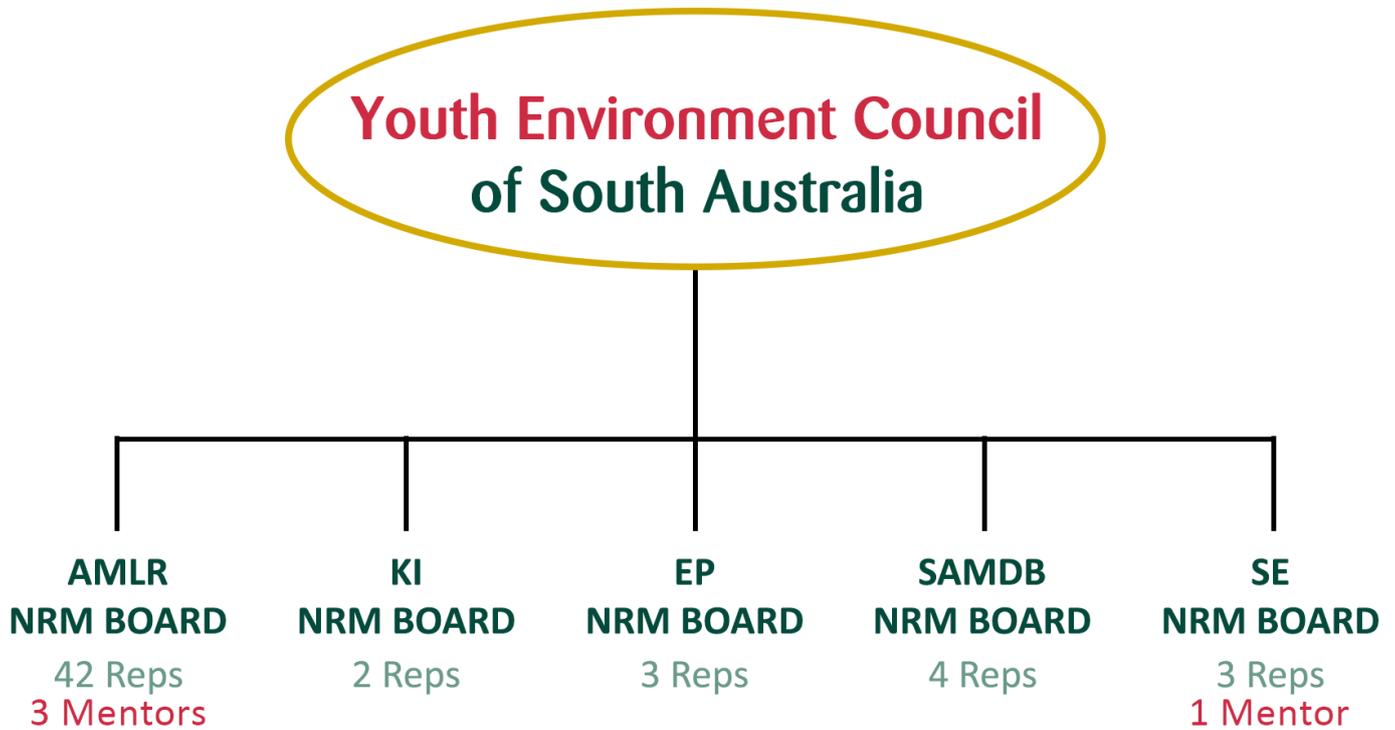


FIGURE 1: Youth Environment Council Representation Breakdown for 2018

5.1 Roles within the YEC & 2019 selection process

Other than four students who were offered roles as mentors, all students interested in being a Youth Environment Council member were required to submit an application. The opportunity to apply was promoted through the YEC website (www.yecsa.net.au); AMLR and SAMDB NRM Education email lists; the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Youth Environment Leadership Program; emails to schools from Natural Resources Management Board Regional Officers across SA; and via emails to every DfE, Catholic and Independent high school in South Australia.

Any student in Years 7 to 10 was eligible to apply, but required signed support from a parent/care-giver and a teacher at their school. Selection of students is normally based on gaining a balance between city and regional locations; males and females; and primary school and high school aged representatives. Seventy-three applications were received, with 60 applicants being selected as members, and 50 accepting the offer. The successful applicants joined the student mentors to form a council of 54.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of member numbers for 2019.

TABLE 1: Membership breakdown by School Type

	No. of students	No. of schools represented
Department for Education	38	26
Independent	12	11
Catholic	4	3
TOTAL	54	40

Primary Schools	20	16
High Schools	18	11
R-12 Schools	16	13
TOTAL	54	40

All members participate in the Council for one year and must reapply through the application process if they wish to be involved in successive years. This ensures that the YEC can cater to a wide audience and provide opportunities to a new cohort of students each year.

5.2 The Mentor Program

The mentor program is an innovative peer education program where selected YEC students are trained in student leadership by NRM staff to help run the YEC program over the year. The mentors interact with and influence other YEC members by running many of the year's activities and by providing peer support. Mentoring the YEC students also enhances the mentors' own leadership skills and further embeds the inclusive and supportive culture of young people taking action for sustainability.

The four mentors in 2019 were from metropolitan Adelaide and the South East. One was a mentor in 2018, while three were new. They were chosen because they had demonstrated exceptional leadership and role-modelling skills, or shown the potential to develop these skills, and had the ability to foster relationships with others.

In 2019, the Mentor Camp was replaced by a Mentor Training Day held at Morialta Conservation Park. This included learning skills around:

- working with NRM Education staff to plan and run activities at YEC events
- welcoming students to help make the process of joining in, taking part and enjoying the YEC easier for others
- sharing their experiences of taking action in their school and local community
- facilitating discussions and small group work
- ensuring that other YEC members feel included, valued, and guiding them along the way when needed
- role-modelling positive and sustainable behaviours.



On the day, the mentors identified their own personal development goals for the year. These included:

- improving public speaking
- being more confident introducing themselves and talking to new people
- strengthening leadership skills
- building on organisational strength
- using their interest and ease in meeting new people to help the YEC members feel comfortable
- helping the members where needed
- working with and leading members
- learning new facts and sharing them with members
- using teaching skills and helping develop people strengths
- working with the other mentors and members
- listening to what the members have to say.



NRM Education staff familiarised themselves with these goals and supported the mentors across the year as they worked on achieving them, particularly at the YEC Leadership Camp. At the end of the year each mentor received a letter detailing constructive feedback from the staff team on their goals, as well as the attitudes, behaviours and skills observed at the Sustainability Forum and Leadership Camp.

Things that the YEC members reported they had learnt from the mentors at the camp reflected many of the goals that the mentors had set themselves. The mentors provided their peers (including their fellow mentors) with hope, positive role-modelling, practical approaches and skills. Here is some feedback from YEC members about what they have learnt from the YEC mentors:

- I learnt about their projects and how they overcame obstacles and hopefully I can take that into my project.
- I have learnt how to work better as a team. I have also learnt to talk to other people too, not just my friends I already knew. I can make more friends this way.
- Be confident and talk to people.
- They told us to just get on with the projects and not to wait until the last second.
- Loren taught me to be confident in myself.
- They are good role models.
- The skills they used to achieve their goals.
- Many small messages put into practise.
- I learnt new games and good advice from them. They also made me feel a part of everyone and brought people together.
- I have learnt to include everyone and have lots of fun, no matter what.
- Don't be afraid.
- More about how to plan our projects.



- Be confident about what you are doing and don't give up just because there are hurdles.
- Having fun and enjoying yourself is a key point and the foundation of leadership.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Always there if I need help.
- How to make a commitment.
- There is always someone that can help you.
- How they lead by example and share their knowledge.
- Public speaking – what not to do & what works well.
- Be confident within yourself.



“I think the thing I enjoyed the most started from what I was most nervous about, which was trying something new and leading the group as one of the mentors.”

Inika, YEC mentor 2019

“I learnt to work more cohesively as a team.”

Connor, YEC mentor 2019

“I’ve learnt that just because you get older you don’t need to give up on your passions.”

Safia, YEC member 2019

“I learnt to continue doing the things I love, and to not give up on this planet.”

Ivy, YEC member 2019



6.0 The YEC Program

As mentioned, students take part in a year-long program to help them implement action projects within their schools or communities. To support them in this they are led through a series of activities which challenge them to think about how they can improve sustainability in a broad context.

6.1 Mentor Day

This one-day training session was held for YEC Mentors at Morialta Conservation Park. The group of four Mentors participated in leadership, group facilitation and planning activities that prepared them for the leadership role they would undertake throughout the YEC program. They also took part in some hands-on learning in the park including bird watching, as well as a range of nature immersion activities to create a sense of connection to place.

“I am looking forward to strengthening my skills as a leader and becoming more confident introducing myself to new people”

Connor, YEC mentor 2019



6.2 Welcome Forum

Fifty-six students came together for the annual Welcome Forum at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. Despite very wet weather on the day, all the students were keen to immerse themselves in nature through activities such as a guided walk through the gardens and a tour of the state Herbarium.

However, the real focus of the day was to meet and share ideas with other students, and to think about the individual sustainability projects they will work on in their schools and communities throughout the year.

Group discussions and brainstorming inspired many fantastic project ideas which would later be extended upon at camp. Students also worked closely with others from their local area to identify external organisations and potential partners they could approach for support with their projects.

6.3 Leadership Camp

Arbury Park Outdoor School (APOS) at Bridgewater was the venue for our annual YEC Leadership Camp once again. During this three-day camp students deepened their knowledge of sustainability issues and increased their skills in leadership, problem solving and team building. APOS and NRM Education staff worked together to design and deliver a program that encouraged students to connect with their surroundings, challenge themselves and think deeply about their goals.

Members took part in both outdoor and indoor activities with a focus on linking their learning with real world practise, and on developing their project ideas to be implemented throughout the year. In planning their projects, they identified support networks, funding opportunities and steps for future action. There was a strong focus this year on issues that could be addressed at a local school or community level; including habitat restoration, school food gardens, nude food and 'straw no more', running sustainability workshops, reducing waste to landfill, investigating impacts of feral animals on national parks and wildlife, and constructing bee and bat boxes.

Rene Campbell, a marine biologist and environmental artist, was an inspiring guest speaker who provided great insights into her journey from a school student with a passion for the environment, to someone who is now doing research on marine pests. Other camp highlights included orienteering, a night frog walk, Landcare activities and the quiz/talent show night.

“I LOVED camp. It was amazing to meet so many wonderful people who care about the environment as much as I do”

Sophie, YEC member 2019

“I enjoyed planning our projects because it made me excited about what we can do”

Sophie, YEC member 2019

“One new skill that I have developed from this event is communication. By speaking out loud, I have encouraged other people in my group to have a say.”

Jessica, YEC member 2019



6.4 Online Sharing Forum

Following the camp, students took their evolving project ideas back to their regions for further development and to gather support from their school communities. Members stayed in touch with each other using the YEC online forum, enabling them to share project updates, achievements, run surveys and to troubleshoot any challenges.

This online tool was also used by NRM Education staff to remotely mentor YEC representatives. Staff assisted students to navigate project planning and delivery, answered student requests and posted links to relevant resources. The online forum was also used to support students in preparing their displays for the sharing and celebration event at the end of the year.

6.5 Regional Events

Following the introduction last year of additional events for YEC members within their local regions, students were again given the option to plan and participate in regional events. This year four events went ahead, allowing members to connect locally and work with a range of other groups and individuals with similar interests.

6.5.1 South East Region

Three YEC members from schools in the South East (Keith Area School, St Martin’s Lutheran School and Glencoe Central Primary School) decided they would like to be involved in the Young Environmental Leaders program; a youth voice event already happening in their region through the SE NRM Board. This event involved a number of students from schools across the region coming together at Naracoorte Caves to share and work on environmental projects.





As part of their involvement, the three YEC members each prepared a short presentation on their YEC project that they shared with the other students to inspire them.

They also developed a team building exercise around pest plants and animals (the theme of the day), which they ran with the whole group. For the rest of the event, they happily joined in with other activities including hands-on weed removal, plant identification and discussions around locally relevant environmental issues. The feedback from YEC members was very positive, with a member remarking, *"I enjoy working with younger students because they can start learning young and continue to build their passion as they get older"*.

6.5.2 Barossa Region

This year two YEC members from the Barossa area (pictured above) worked together on a regional event. They organised a native bee hotel workshop for over 80 students from two local schools, which involved a guest speaker specialising in native bee habitat. The YEC students worked over a number of months to gather materials, develop written guides and deliver a demonstration to attending students on how to construct the hotels. In total, 43 bee hotels were built on the day and these were placed around the Tanunda Urban Forest site.

6.5.3 Southern Adelaide Region

A regional event was also held at Urrbrae Wetlands for YEC members from the Southern suburbs of metropolitan Adelaide. Members from Urrbrae Agricultural High School were keen to show the students from other schools the sustainability aspects of their site. These included sharing how the wetlands capture and clean stormwater from the surrounding area, and how wetlands provide habitat for birds, bats, insects and other invertebrates, some of which they spotted during the day.

Staff from the [Urrbrae Wetland Learning Centre](#) helped the visiting students undertake aquatic macroinvertebrate testing. Some interesting water bugs were found, which were examined

under microscopes. One of the YEC students then spoke to the group about a PhD study being undertaken to measure the level of methane emissions coming from the wetland. The students were also able to speak with each other and NRM Education Officers about their project progress, share ideas and ask for advice ahead of the final sharing and celebration forum. This was a valuable opportunity to check in and reflect on their YEC involvement and projects.

6.5.4 Central Adelaide Region

The final regional event was for YEC members in the Central Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region, who identified local Landcare activities and native flora and fauna as areas of particular interest. In response to this, NRM Education organised a one-day event where members had the opportunity to meet with local Landcare groups and learn about their work. The event was attended by nine students, who travelled by minibus to visit various locations in Upper Sturt and Belair. During the bus ride, members interviewed each other to find out about project progress, celebrated their achievements and helped one another troubleshoot challenges.

The morning was spent with volunteers from the Friends of Sturt Gorge, who led a tour of the Renwick Street riparian restoration site, showcased a range of mapping tools used by volunteers to track wildlife sightings and on ground works, and invited students to take part in hands-on removal of the introduced olive trees on site. In the afternoon students then met with the Friends of Sturt Upper Reaches to learn about their activities. They visited various areas the group have been caring for, learnt about the work of the younger Bush Buddies group and about local native and pest plant species. They were also shown useful local flora and fauna resources they can explore further. Students enjoyed learning to identify local plant species, doing some hand weeding and learning about the local bandicoot project in the area.



For those students who couldn't make it on the bus tour, we provided an opportunity to visit Sturt Gorge on a Sunday instead. Three students attended along with parents and siblings (pictured below) and took part in a range of activities including weed identification, boneseed removal and a tour of the creek restoration site led by two members of the Friends group. They also heard about some European and geological history of the area and visited the flood mitigation dam and an area of remnant and regrowth grey box grassy woodland.



6.6 Sharing and Celebration Forum

The Sharing and Celebration Forum provided an opportunity for students to celebrate the completion of their involvement in the leadership program with the YEC and to display and explain their journey in developing their YEC project to a range of stakeholders.

The Minister for Environment and Water, the Honourable David Speirs attended the ceremony, paying tribute to the contribution that the YEC members are playing in their community and he presented students with their Youth Environment Council Certificates of Achievement.

Students presented their projects to their peers, school teachers, parents, the Minister and the Presiding Member of the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board. This year there was a broad cross section of projects, including habitat restoration and garden development; nest box construction for local native wildlife; creation of student sustainability groups at numerous schools; community events and training for younger students; improved school waste management systems; and research and awareness raising around a range of issues.

There were also several unique and creative projects that hadn't previously been explored; one student introduced keep cups across their entire college, while another organised AUSMAP training on micro plastics for the wider school community. There was even a student who created a puppet show and children's book which she toured around local primary schools to teach about sustainable behaviour change.

"I'll never forget this experience and how everyone can work as a team to create amazing outcomes."

Molly, YEC member 2019

"It's a great way to communicate with other passionate kids, and people who like what you do."

Mick, YEC member 2019

"I have enjoyed being with people who share the same interests as me and having fun at different activities and events."

Lucy, YEC member 2019



“It has made me more driven and confident with getting my word out there.”

Molly, YEC member 2019

7.0 The Ripple Effect

One of the key aspects of involvement in the YEC is that students share their passion, knowledge and skills with their whole school and wider community. They are encouraged to innovate and explore different ways to raise awareness. Some of the approaches taken in 2019 included:

- creating habitat by revegetating gardens and bushland
- proactively raising awareness through brochures and posters displayed around the school and community
- delivering presentations and education sessions to school classes and the community
- working with other schools, councils, organisations and local land care groups
- undertaking scientific inquiries and ecosystem monitoring
- conducting research and surveys in school and in the wider community
- fundraising for environmental groups and organisations
- making videos, art, stories and presentations to communicate sustainability messages
- implementing more sustainable practices in school and community settings
- planning school and community environmental working bees and planting days.



7.1 The Ripple Effect in Action - Evidence

The Youth Environment Council has inspired powerful learners. By having a choice in their research topic, students become highly engaged in their learning. By developing a plan of action, they are challenged to discuss and develop potential solutions.

In 2019, there were 40 projects initiated by YEC members to support student voice and action in both school and community contexts. These projects have been summarised below.

Cultural change and awareness-raising: Researching and creating awareness around the importance of leaf litter and of bamboo and hemp as sustainable products; forming school environmental committees and sustainability groups; researching school climate change adaptation activities; educating school and wider community about native bees, deer management and cane toads as a pest species; implementing school recycling education; advocating for pollution reduction at the local creek; developing a documentary on good conservation practices for private property; creating a series of educational videos on environmental issues; creating educational posters on establishing backyard habitat for native species, reducing plastic waste, sustainable behaviour change ideas and nude food; fundraising for various environmental causes and organisations; building partnerships with local council and community groups; and informing their school community about the YEC and their project achievements.

Food gardening: Reinvigorating a school food garden.



Biodiversity: Delivering a multi-school native bee workshop and working bee; implementing conservation practices on private property, including weed management and cat traps; building native bee and insect hotels; revegetating school sensory and native gardens; propagating and planting native plants with local land care groups; restoring habitat for native birds, butterflies and bees; revegetating native plants in their local area; delivering community native propagation and planting workshops; monitoring bats and creating bat boxes; and building bird baths.

Waste: Advocating for the school to switch to personalised reusable cups; mapping micro plastics in their local area; implementing new school recycling systems; implementing nude food days at school; creating a book and props to deliver educational puppet shows on recycling to preschool students; planning a community clean-up day; creating art and items, including produce bags and sea glass jewellery, from recycled materials; educating the local community on composting food waste; surveying the school community on their current waste management practices and improvement opportunities; and implementing recycling education at the local library.

Case Study: Declan (Year 8)

Declan was concerned and inspired by the unimaginable amount of waste created by disposable cups. His objective was to have his school and wider community switch to reusable cups to reduce waste.

Declan says his first challenge was that children at his school did not see a huge need to replace the disposable cups, so he found it more effective working with teachers as his initial target audience.

Declan researched the different options for reusable alternatives, selected a suitable cup type, created his own design, and organised for reusable cups to be produced in bulk. With some assistance from his Environment Club, he created and distributed posters in his front office and around the school to promote the product.

He knew it was important to organise a simple way for his school community to purchase the cups, so he arranged for orders to be made via the front office. Declan was shocked by the immediate success, selling 200 cups!

To those looking to do a similar project, Declan's advice is to have a clear understanding of your product, compare the different costs and product options available, and to have a plan for getting your product to your customers.

Declan says he enjoyed the whole experience, learning more about the rubbish in his community and the significant impact that disposable cups have on the environment. Declan has now placed multiple cup orders and says he will continue making reusable cups available at his school as long as there is demand for them.

General capabilities demonstrated through this project: Literacy, numeracy, critical and creative thinking, and personal and social capability.



Case Study: Grace (Year 8)

Grace lives on Kangaroo Island and is passionate about conservation and land management. Her project involved local on-ground action to manage weeds and pests, create habitat for biodiversity and to protect birds.

Her intention was to demonstrate conservation practices on her family's property, and to use film to educate the community about actions they can take on their own land.

Grace worked closely with Land for Wildlife and her local Natural Resources Management officer to set up survey lines and collect wildlife data using motion-sensing cameras. She also set up cat traps and sourced and planted native seedlings to create habitat for the Glossy Black Cockatoo.

By filming elements of her project, Grace created a documentary trailer which screened at a local school film festival, where she was nominated for an environmentalist award. She will also hold a stall, joining local musicians and presenters at an upcoming Wildlife Carnival, to share her project with the wider community.

She believes her biggest success was working with children to better understand how they perceive conservation practices. She is proud to be the first at her school campus to become a Youth Environment Council member, and have the opportunity to teach other students about the program and her project.

Grace says it was a memorable experience, and that she enjoyed making new friendships and editing the film. She hopes to finish and enter the documentary in an annual film festival competition. Grace's advice to other YEC members implementing projects is to focus on what they're passionate about!

General capabilities demonstrated through this project: Literacy, numeracy, critical and creative thinking, and personal and social capability.



7.2 Ministerial Support

Minister Speirs attended the Sharing and Celebration Forum at Cleland Wildlife Park and spoke with students about their projects, addressing the YEC with an inspiring speech and thanking the students for their efforts and enthusiasm. This is a very important part of the YEC program each year because students report that having contact with members of parliament makes them feel their opinions and ideas are valued and that they have a strong voice to share.

7.3 Special events and opportunities

Three mentors from the YEC participated in two forums and workshops run by the Environment Protection Authority about the changes being made to the SA Container Deposit Legislation (CDL). There were presentations, a panel discussion (with the opportunity for the mentors to ask the panel questions), and table consultation about the scoping paper and what it should include. This was a wonderful opportunity for the Mentors, representing the voice of youth in SA as the CDL is reviewed and updated.

8.0 Youth Environment Council Evaluation

YEC students completed evaluations after both the mid-year Arbury Park Leadership Camp and the end of year Sharing Forum at Cleland Wildlife Park. Feedback was also sought from teachers and parents at the end of the program regarding the impact of their student's/child's involvement in the YEC.

The feedback demonstrated a strong link between participating in the YEC and improved skills, knowledge and ability to develop and lead sustainability projects at their school or in their community.



8.1 Arbury Park Leadership Camp Evaluation

The main focus of the camp was to engage and connect students based upon their individual passions and interests. The camp also aimed to support them in building skills and knowledge to bring about change through planning and implementing sustainability projects in their schools and communities. Evaluation results from the 43 students surveyed who attended the Arbury Park camp showed that 90% felt they 'have a voice to share what they are passionate about', and 'know about a wide range of sustainability topics and actions they can take'.

8.2 End of Year Evaluation

The end of year evaluation process also asked students to identify any growth areas in terms of skills, opportunities and/or personal growth as a result of participating in the YEC program over the year. Evaluation of 44 YEC students showed that 100% felt confident about sharing their environmental knowledge, skills, ideas and/or opinions with others. The vast majority (91%) of the students also felt confident about modelling sustainability behaviours to others around them, and 82% of students felt they had knowledge of how to approach community leaders (e.g. representatives of Councils or Boards).

Please rate your confidence with the following skills/knowledge on a scale from 0 (no confidence) to 5 (very confident)

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Public speaking/presenting			4	10	14	15
Research and problem solving			1	6	19	17
Sharing your environmental knowledge, skills, ideas and/or opinions with others				10	10	23
Modelling sustainable behaviours to others around you			4	6	18	17
Knowledge of how to approach community leaders (e.g. representatives of Councils or Boards)		2	6	16	9	11
Connecting with community members/groups (e.g. local businesses, action groups, clubs etc.)		2	2	15	13	12

Students described how the YEC has influenced them and their future ambitions:

“YEC has reminded me that I have a voice and can change things.”

Caitlin, YEC member 2019

“It has influenced me to take action, organise community events and maybe make a business against pollution.”

Imogen, YEC member 2019

“By doing my project I have had a perspective shift.”

Grace, YEC member 2019

“YEC has shown me the different types of ways you can have a positive impact on the environment which inspires my future profession.”

Summer, YEC member 2019

Students wrote about how the YEC has met their expectations:

“I did expect YEC would assist me in speaking up for change and it did.”

Michael, YEC member 2019

“YEC supported me with giving me more information and ideas so that I can improve my project.”

Sharif, YEC member 2019

“By being a friendly and inclusive place.”

Summer, YEC member 2019

Students described what they have done to promote change in their school or community as a result of being in the YEC over the year:

“I have put my posters around the school about things anyone can do at home to create a sustainable household.”

Molly, YEC member 2019

“Made a compost bin at home, knew what to ask people for survey questions, knew lots about composting and used that to drive my project.”

Sarah, YEC member 2019

“Joined B-Tay, helped Vinnies and the WAO.”

Polina, YEC member 2019

8.3 A Parent's Perspective

All parents of YEC members were invited to complete a short survey on their child's experience over the year. Surveys were emailed to parents after the Sharing and Celebration Forum, however only two responses were received. This could be, in part, because of the lead up to Christmas and often busy time at the end of the year. Given the low response rate from parents in 2019, we will look into new ways of obtaining information from parents in future.

Parents were asked the following questions:

- What did your child gain from being a part of the YEC?
- Has your child's involvement in the YEC had an impact on what they do at home or in the local community?
- What helped/would help you support your child?

A selection of quotes from parents (both verbally and in writing) regarding their child's involvement with the YEC include:

"She became a stronger advocate for the environment and recognised that she could make a difference herself, she didn't have to rely on adults. She became more confident."

"She became more active in instigating changes to help the environment."

"I'm so proud of what my son has achieved while he has been in the YEC over a number of years."

8.4 A Teacher's Perspective

All supporting school staff were also emailed a survey on their students' experience. The survey questions were:

- Have you noticed a change in your student this year as a result of their participation in the Youth Environment Council?
- Have there been any changes/benefits/outcomes for the whole school as a result of this student's involvement in the YEC?
- Would you encourage your students to apply for the YEC next year?
- What helped/would help you to support your student?

This year three teachers and/or principals responded to our survey request. In answer to the question of whether they would encourage students to apply again next year, all of respondents said yes. The perspective of teachers is highly valued as they are the people with long term relationships with the students who are able to see changes in values, attitudes and behaviours within the school setting. As with the parent survey, we will continue to look at different ways of engaging teachers and other school support staff in our end of year surveys. We hope to receive a greater number of responses in 2020.



9.0 Summary

The 2019 YEC program continues the legacy of success developed over the 22 years of its existence. Parents', teachers' and the students' own reflections are testament to the strength of the program in helping give a platform for the voice of young South Australians advocating for the environment and sustainability.

Past YEC members who rise to become student mentors are a keystone in the success of the council. Being a mentor gives older students the opportunity to develop skills as leaders and their contribution helps build and maintain the supportive and collaborative culture the council has developed. The mentor role also enables students to provide peer-support and role-model positive behaviours.

During the year, students develop a project related to an environmental area of interest. They research and explore how they can make a difference in their school and/or community, and are given support during YEC events and by educators at their school. Some projects focus on a local issue, while others look more to national or even international issues, but all seek to improve socio-environmental outcomes.

At the final event of the year, the Sharing and Celebration Forum, students share their research and actions with parents, teachers, members of the NRM Board and other invited guests. The expo-style event allows the students to share their work interactively and provides the opportunity for them to hone their presentation skills, share ideas with each other and receive recognition for their efforts. We were pleased to once again have the Minister for Environment and Water, David Speirs MP, attend the event. The YEC members were excited to have a representative of Government attending and they thoroughly enjoyed conversing with Minister Speirs, telling him about their projects and what they are passionate about. Some even put out a call to action to the Minister!

YEC members developed many skills through their involvement this year including:

- gaining self-confidence and the belief in their own abilities
- confidence in developing speeches, teamwork and the ability to work with others
- making new friends and developing support networks
- planning and undertaking actions that lead to a more sustainable future.

In their feedback, members frequently cite feelings of agency and power to take positive steps for the environment, challenging themselves and others to live more sustainably. They are encouraged to see themselves and their peers making a difference, challenging the notion that young people do not have power to create change. Many also mention a desire to pursue careers in the environmental sector.

As a result, their schools and communities have gained young people equipped with skills, knowledge and values to create change. As engaged and active citizens, they are a positive force for their communities, educating and empowering others. These outcomes all meet the aims of the Youth Environment Council of SA, as well as matching the intended outcomes for the DfE Teaching for Effective Learning Framework.



The Australian Curriculum Learning Areas, General Capabilities and Cross Curriculum Priorities continue to provide exciting opportunities to embed the YEC into a state-wide approach of producing powerful and engaged learners, underpinned by the principles of student voice and Education for Sustainability.

This year YEC mentors and council members were invited to provide feedback to the Government on a range of initiatives, including proposed changes to Container Deposit Legislation. We will continue to seek opportunities outside of the YEC for young people to have a say on issues they're concerned about, and encourage Government departments to include youth voice authentically in their decision-making processes.

At the end of each year, we are re-inspired by all that has been achieved by the YEC and its countless members, mentors and friends. The continuing successes of the YEC as an authentic, futures-focussed program for youth voice highlights the strength of the longstanding partnership between the Department for Education and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board.

In 2020 the YEC will transition into the new Landscape Boards and Green Adelaide. We look forward to the opportunities this will provide and we will continue to deliver the program for the young people of South Australia to have their voices heard.



10.0 Appendices

10.1 Schools represented by YEC members in 2019

- Adelaide High School
- Alberton Primary School
- Allenby Gardens Primary School
- Banksia Park School
- Belair Primary School
- Black Forest Primary School
- Burnside Primary School
- Burton Primary School
- Cardijn College
- Cleve Area School
- Cornerstone College
- Faith Lutheran College
- Glencoe Central Primary School
- Glenunga International High School
- Hawthorndene Primary School
- Immanuel College
- Kangaroo Island Community Education
- Keith Area School
- Lock Area School
- Loreto College
- Loxton High School
- Macclesfield Primary School
- Marryatville High School
- Mount Barker Waldorf School
- One Tree Hill Primary School
- Para Hills West Primary School
- Parafield Gardens Primary School
- Parndana Campus
- Salisbury East High School
- Seymour College
- Southern Montessori College
- St Martins Lutheran College
- St Michael's College
- St John's Grammar
- Tanunda Primary School
- Tatachilla Lutheran School
- Urrbrae Agricultural High School
- Victor Harbour High School
- Waikerie Primary School
- Wilderness School
- Woodcroft College
- Woodcroft Primary School
- Woodville High School



10.2 The proposed YEC program for 2020

Date	Event	Intended outcomes
Thu 2 Apr (Term1 Week 10)	Mentor Training Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build leadership, mentoring and communication skills • Practice team building, group facilitation skills • Participate in hands on conservation/taking action skills • Review Sustainability Forum and YEC Camp agendas, roles and activities.
Thu 30 Apr (Term 2 Week 1)	Sustainability Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induct new YEC council • Overview of YEC expectations, events, Leadership Camp FAQ and Online Forum tasks • Team building and group norms • Establish shared understanding of sustainability, youth voice and taking action • 2018 members share their experiences and projects • Create online forum account. <p>By the end of the session members will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connected with YEC members that have a common interest • shared their knowledge and opinions to hone in on their area of passion • an understanding of ways they can grow their passion • started documenting the people who make up their sustainability network • participated in hands-on sustainability learning based on the environments within the Botanic Gardens.
Term 2	Reminders sent (email/ online forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder to ask any camp questions online
Mon 1- Wed 3 Jun (Term 2 Week 6)	YEC camp	<p>Camp learning intentions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What am I passionate about? • What skills do I need to tell my story and influence others? • Who in my school or community can help me? • What are my first next steps? <p>By the end of the camp members will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • built on leadership, mentoring and communication skills • practiced team building, group facilitation skills • deepened sustainability and ecological knowledge and skills • participated in hands on conservation/taking action skills • worked with YEC members with similar interests to conceptualize and start planning how to progress research, an event or initiative in their area of passion.

Date	Event	Intended outcomes
Term 2-3	Online forum task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report back on progress to date on the 'next steps' identified at YEC camp (choice of questions to answer) • Share photos, contacts and resources that might be useful to other members.
Term 2- 3	Reminders sent (online/ email)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder to contact NRM Education if they are experiencing any challenges with progressing their area of passion • Send information about requirements for sharing achievements at the Sharing Forum • Reminder to ask any Sharing Forum questions online.
Term 3	Online forum task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report back on progress of research, event or initiative (choice of questions to answer) • Share ideas of how they will display their work at the Sharing Forum.
Term 3 (between Mon 20 Jul- Fri 28 Aug)	Regional YEC events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate networking and project sharing amongst students from the same NRM region • Encourage contact with relevant organisations and individuals which could be useful for framing and addressing local issues • Feed into any opportunities to address or prepare submissions to local NRM Boards (as relevant).
Thu 22 Oct (Term 4 Week 2)	YEC Sharing forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and share achievements over the year through individual or group interactive displays for invited guests • Recognise and celebrate achievements over the year • Plan steps to sustain the initiatives started • Reflect on personal journeys over the year, the impact of the YEC and provide feedback to NRM Education to improve the Council for next year.
As required	Contact with regional NRM boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide authentic opportunities for YEC members to feed into NRM Boards on environmental issues of concern to them and their proposed solutions • Provide youth representation and input to Boards and other departments as required.



Government of South Australia

Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board
Department for Education