Youth Environment Council (YEC) Project Fact Sheet

What is the YEC?

The Youth Environment Council of South Australia (YEC) is a state-wide group for students in years 7-11 who care about the environment and want to take real action on sustainability. Members learn about environmental issues, develop leadership skills, meet like-minded young people, and work on projects throughout the year.

What is the YEC Project?

As part of being a Youth Environment Council (YEC) member, **you choose and work on your own sustainability project** throughout the year. This project gives you the chance to take action on something YOU care about, whether it's at home, school, or in your local community. You don't have to "finish" a perfect product; the focus and purpose of doing a project is on your **learning, growth and action journey**.

Why we ask you to do a project

As a member of the YEC, we expect you to do a project because of the experiences, opportunities, skills and knowledge it provides. It's also your opportunity to explore your passion, work with others, learn through doing, and impact your world, not just research or write a report.

Your project gives you a chance to:

- **Learn** more about an environmental or sustainability topic that's important to you.
- **Connect with your community,** make new friendships and build teamwork**.**
- **Develop** skills, such as teamwork, planning, problem-solving, and communication.

The Youth Environment Council of South Australia was initiated by the Department for Environment and Water in partnership with the Department for Education in 1997. It is now coordinated by Green Adelaide.

- **Take action and create real change** on an environmental or sustainability topic on a local or global scale.
- **Share your work** to recognise your efforts, inspire others and be a leaders for others.
- **Be an active citizen, leader and create change** now as a young person, not just when you're older.

Your project is *your story* of effort, learning and progress, not just a "finished" product.

Steps to complete your project

As a YEC member, you will:

1. **Choose a theme and topic you care about.** It could be waste, wildlife, climate, water, gardening, transport, awareness-raising or something else. *YEC staff can help you decide if you're not sure*.
2. **Plan and work on your project** throughout the year aligning actions with the 3 foundations (Community and Connection, Environmental Knowledge and Hands-On Action, Leadership and Inspiration). Seek support from your YEC mentors, YEC staff, your family, and your teacher. *We would hope that families and school staff are also able to offer guidance but are not expected to do the work*.
3. **Share your progress and learning at the Sharing & Celebration Forum** with a creative display, photos, stories, or activities.

There are **no strict rules** about what your project should look like; it just needs to be meaningful, personal, and action focused. Be open to learning, growing, and trying new things! You don't need to "finish" your project. The project is an opportunity for you to learn more about and take action on something you are interested in.

Step 1 – Choose a project theme and topic

Theme 1) Water, Marine & Coastal
Topic examples include:

- Water quality
- Stormwater Pollution
- My local creek or wetland
- Marine plastics
- Marine Parks
- Coastal habitats

Theme 2) Plants, Animals, & Land
Topic examples include:

- Native plants
- Native animals
- Urban biodiversity
- Threatened species & ecological communities
- Wildlife friendly gardens
- Food gardens/Regenerative agriculture

Theme 3) Climate Change

Topic examples include:

- Adaptation/mitigation
- Energy use
- Transport
- Climate change awareness & advocacy
- Effects on local environment
- Conservation

Theme 4) Community & First Nations Engagement

Topic examples include:

- First Nations' links and connections to Country
- Starting an environmental group
- Volunteering
- Environmental awareness raising
- First Nations community engagement & activities
- Advocacy

Step 2 – Take action connected to the three foundations

To help you think about the *journey* of your project (not just the final outcome), **include activities or learning in your project that cover all three foundations**:

F1. Community and Connection

Build relationships and strengthen your network and community. Find others in your community that have similar interests or can support/contribute to your project. This might include students, teachers, local groups, councils, or families.

This could include:

- Working with other students or a community group.
- Asking classmates or local people what they think.
- Involving your school, council or family.

For example: Start a school eco-club and invite students and teachers to join, hold an event and invite others to attend to get involved.

F2. Environmental Knowledge and Hands-on Action

Learn more about the environment and DO something about it! This is your chance to learn by *doing*, not just reading.

This could include:

- Outdoor activities and skill-building.
- Learning practical sustainability techniques.
- Using tools to make or improve something.

For example: Plant native trees, build wildlife homes, or create upcycled items.

F3. Leadership and Inspiration

Share what you've learned and encourage others to act. Educate and inspire others to get on board with your project or take-action on something they are interested in. Leadership is about inspiring and upskilling others, not just completing your own project.

This could include:

- Showing others how to help.
- Teaching a class, hosting a workshop, or speaking at school.
- Inspiring others to continue the work.

For example: Run a session at school assembly to teach sustainability skills.

Step 3 - Share your project with the YEC

At the end of year event, **Sharing & Celebration Forum**, you'll:

- **Share your project through a display** (photos, boards, interactive activities).
- **Talk with invited visitors and peers** about your journey. *Visitors include family, teachers, community members and government leaders*.
- **Celebrate what you have done and learned.**

This is a day to share **your** story, outcomes, challenges, and learnings.

You can read more about the Sharing and Celebration Forum on the YEC website.
https://www.yecsa.net.au/uploads/4/5/9/1/45910351/celebration_forum_faq.pdf

Project Examples from Past YEC Members

Here are some things YEC members have done in past years:

- Started a veggie garden at school.
- Designed a mural with local artwork.
- Surveyed students on recycling habits.
- Built a beehive project with a community garden.
- Investigated threatened species and raised awareness.
- Created eco-friendly products like upcycled jewellery.

These show how projects can be creative, hands-on and community connected.