

ANNUAL REPORT 2016



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1.0 Executive Summary

The Youth Environment Council (YEC) has been running for 19 years now, and provides young people across SA with environmental interests a space to develop their enthusiasm, as well as a suite of life-long skills.

The YEC program is geared towards giving 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 valued and are far more powerful when we work with others to make a difference.

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 students become powerful learners, 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, 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.

Six of the seven general capabilities are strongly woven through the YEC program:

- Literacy
- Personal and social capacity
- Information and communication technology
- Ethical understanding
- Critical and creative thinking
- Inter-cultural understanding.

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

The Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board (AMLR NRMB) recognises the value of authentic student voice, which empowers young people and provides them with the skills, curiosity and creativity to take action for the environment and live more sustainable lifestyles.

It is important that these students understand that they don't have to wait until adulthood to be a leader in their community. Armed with a network of students like-minded in thinking, confidence and skills, they are equipped to tackle environmental and sustainability challenges today.



2.0 Background

Since 1997 the YEC has provided a voice to young people in key environmental issues facing South Australia and has given them opportunities to take action to achieve a more environmentally sustainable future for SA.

The YEC is a joint initiative of DECD 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 Youth Voice 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 Aligning DECD and Natural Resources Priorities

The Youth Environment Council’s outcomes align very well with the Australian Curriculum, DECD Priorities and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Plan 2014-15 to 2023-24.

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.*

NRM Education is charged with developing the capacity of the community, particularly school communities, 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 and communicate strong messages to their wider communities, and involve them in taking action.

4.2 DECD Priorities

4.2.1 Best practice pedagogy

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)
- students sharing what they have learnt and experienced in varied modes: displays; speeches; newsletter articles and workshops (2.2, 4.4)
- expecting students to drive their own learning around a sustainability or environmental topic of their interest, with staff support when needed (3.1)
- students skilfully solving problems and being pro-active in new situations (3.2)
- recognizing and building upon students' prior knowledge about projects, their community and sustainability (4.1)
- encouraging students to participate in the community by joining local groups, advocating for change and getting involved in local on-ground projects (4.2)
- students applying their learning in real world contexts by taking action to support a positive change for our world (4.3).



A key aim of the YEC and more broadly the ethos that underpins it, Educating for Sustainability, is to develop young leaders who know themselves, know their voice and are prepared to use it.

4.2.2 Supports the intentions behind the Australian Curriculum

Sustainability involves many complex issues. Students need to be engaged to be able to make sense of the issues they are researching and to assist them to develop an understanding of how these issues apply to them and their local environs. YEC program content is developed in collaboration with YEC mentors (see section 5.2), to ensure activities provide skills, and are engaging and relevant for the whole YEC audience.

As a result NRM Education uses multiple ways to engage young learners by developing activities that cater for all learning styles and by challenging them to think about the sustainability issues that face society.

The program builds resilience by helping members to explore potential solutions and/or actions that can be taken. There is also a strong focus on engaging others in the process of developing sustainable lifestyles, with the philosophy that we are a far more powerful force when we work with, and hear the voices of others. Students participating in the YEC program develop valuable skills to be active global citizens.



4.3 Links to the Australian Curriculum

Whilst the Youth Environment Council has a focus on empowering student voice and educating its members for sustainability, six of the seven General Capabilities from the Australian Curriculum are also strongly woven throughout the YEC program.

4.3.1 Literacy:

A focus of the YEC program is to encourage students to develop communication skills in order to improve their ability to lead, work in a team, network and support their opinions with facts. Students listen, observe, read, write and speak to each other and staff and are encouraged to explain, justify, problem solve, expand and respond to questions when presenting ideas and the final project. Many students produce written and/or visual material to present the findings of their final project and are responsible for sourcing and collating information and managing their own learning during this period.

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

4.3.2 Information and communication technology:

The online discussion forum develops members' skills to access online communication tools allowing them to keep in touch between face-to face events. The forum is interactive and multi-modal, enabling students to take responsibility and control for how they interact with the group during discussions. Students are encouraged to develop their discussion skills using the YEC website blog page to pose questions and share their project research and progress. They are able to upload photos or use text to share challenges, learnings and pose questions for others to respond to. Through their projects, students also chose to produce websites, make films/videos, and produce online surveys.

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

4.3.3 Critical and creative thinking:

YEC students are presented with challenges to solve individually and as a group. Students are accountable for their own projects and decisions, and develop creative and resourceful strategies to overcome hurdles. Students are deliberately exposed to challenging scenarios and situations that require a creative solution, in order to develop confidence in their own ability to create, adapt and think logically about an issue.

Learning Area links: Civics and Citizenship (ACHCS057), (ACHCS055), (ACHCS085); English (ACELY1720); Health and Physical Education (ACPPS079), (ACPMP105); Geography (ACHGS061)



4.3.4 Personal and social capacity:

The framework of the YEC program allows and supports students to take control of their own learning, decision making and develop a sense of responsibility and accountability. Students are challenged through outdoor learning and asked to problem solve in small and large groups. Students develop skills and relationships with a wide variety of students from different backgrounds and schools. Students are enabled to create meaningful change within their community and challenge traditional thinking models. Through this students develop leadership, negotiation, written and verbal communication and presentation skills and increase their self-worth through connecting with like-minded peers.

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

4.3.5 Ethical understanding:

YEC students are exposed to a number of scenarios that require critical and creative thinking, independent inquiry and cooperative teamwork. Students apply these skills in order to determine the competing interests that can lead to changes in the natural environment. The concept of sustainability; balancing the needs of society, the economy and the environment are presented through a number of tasks students are required to tackle. The student project allows students to research one topic in greater detail to understand the complexity of an issue. Students are asked to justify and support their views with research, and are challenged to present their findings amongst their peers.

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

4.3.6 Intercultural understanding:

The members of the YEC come from across South Australia and consist of students from rural and urban environments and from a variety of backgrounds. Students are exposed to people who live alternative lifestyles to themselves and who express differing opinions to themselves. In this way, students are fortunate to be introduced to people who they may not meet within their normal social life. Students learn that they are citizens of the world who have the power to create change locally. Their opinions are not necessarily the same as those of others and they are able to see that views are formed from beliefs and experiences. Students are encouraged to share their own views and be respectful of others beliefs.

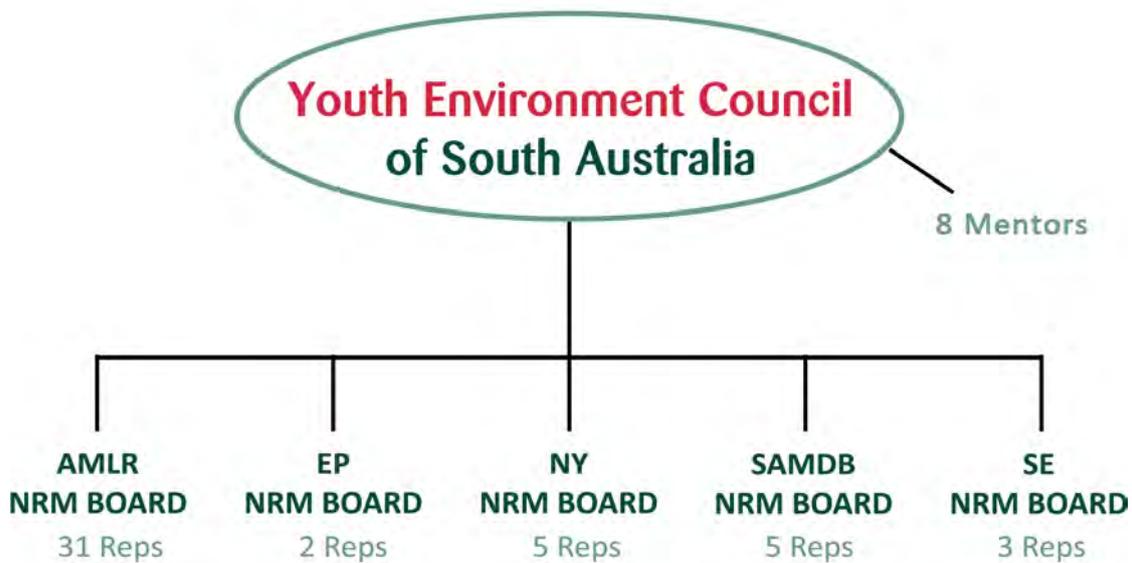
Learning Area links: Health and Physical Education (ACPPS093), (ACPMP086), (ACPPS079); Civics and Citizenship (ACHCS057); Geography (ACHGK065)



5.0 Membership in 2016

This year 46 students in Years 7 to 11 from 30 schools across South Australia were chosen to be members of the YEC (eight of whom were mentors selected from the previous year). Unfortunately, some members had to pull out but the remaining students on the Council represented the voices of young people from schools across South Australia. Students represented the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region, Eyre Peninsula, Northern and Yorke Peninsula, the SA Murray Darling Basin, and the South East. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of representation from the South Australian NRM regions.

FIGURE 1: Youth Environment Council Representation Breakdown for 2016



All students interested in being a member of the Youth Environment Council submitted an application. The applications were promoted through: the YEC website (www.yecsa.net.au); AMLR and SAMDB NRM Education email lists; Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Youth Environment Leadership Program; emails to schools from Natural Resources Management Board Regional Officers across SA; and through emails to every DECD, Catholic and Independent high school in the state.

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. The selection of students from the applications is normally based on: gaining a balance between city and regional; male and female; and primary school and high school aged representatives. This year 38 applications were received with all applicants being selected as members.

The successful applicants joined eight student mentors to form a council of 46.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of member numbers for 2016.



TABLE 1: Membership breakdown by School Type

	No. of students	No. of schools represented
DECD	33	20
Independent	7	5
Catholic	6	5
TOTAL	46	30

Primary Schools	24	13
High Schools	13	9
R-12 Schools	9	8
TOTAL	46	30

All members participate in the Council for a term of one year. If council members wish to participate in subsequent years they must apply through the application process. This ensures that the YEC can cater to a wide audience and therefore provide training opportunities to a new cohort of students each year.

5.1 Roles within the YEC and the Selection Process for 2016

MEMBER

Selection process: By application, open at the beginning of each year. Selected on merit and geography by NRM Ed staff.

Considerations: The council wants representation from across the state.

Term: Become members in Term 1 and are members for one school year.

Eligibility: Student in year 7-10, interested in the environment and sustainability.

Number: Approximately 60 members on the council.

Following year: Need to reapply through the member selection process in the following year to be a part of the YEC again. Members from the previous year will be notified when applications are open.

MENTOR

Selection process: Approached by NRM Education staff. Conversation between staff and student.

Considerations: Opportunity to share experience with other members whilst stepping back. Assist with culture of YEC.

Term: Become mentors in Term 1 and are members for one school year.

Eligibility: Ideally a year 9-11 student. Must have been a part of the YEC for at least one year as a member and demonstrated strong role modelling.

Number: Up to eight mentors per year. May change from year to year depending on numbers.

Following year: May be approached to be a mentor again.

5.2 The Mentor Program

The mentor program is an innovative peer education program whereby selected YEC students (typically Yr 9-10) are trained in student leadership by NRM Education staff to help run the YEC program over the year.

The eight student mentors interact with and influence younger members by running many of the year's activities at the various forums including the Arbury Park camp. Mentoring the forty or so YEC students also enhances the mentors' own leadership skills. This further embeds the inclusive and supportive culture of young people taking action for sustainability.

Potential mentors are selected by the NRM Education team and are invited to participate in the program. These are students who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and role-modelling skills (or the potential to develop these skills) and have the ability to foster relationships with others.

The eight student mentors took part in an additional overnight training camp at Monarto Zoo to develop the skills required for their role, which include:

- 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.

“I have learnt many new things from other students. I really liked how we were all like a community, a family in a way. We learnt things about each other, and each other's views. I also liked the teamwork activities, they were fun.”

Kira, YEC member 2016, Yr 9

“I learnt from the mentors that you just need the courage to take the first step and your journey will be easier from there on.”

Matylda, YEC member 2016, Yr 7



6.0 The YEC Program

Representatives took part in the following events:

6.1 Mentor Camp at Monarto

This overnight bush camp provided an opportunity for the eight YEC mentors to develop their mentoring and facilitation skills, plus leadership and teamwork skills, prior to the first student event in April. Mentors also provided input and assistance with the YEC leadership camp event planning.

6.2 Sustainability Forum at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, April

The YEC Sustainability Forum was the first event of the year for 44 YEC representatives.

Held at numerous locations throughout the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, the Sustainability Forum gave the students an opportunity to get to know each other, develop new skills and prepare for the year ahead.

The students explored how we are connected to the environment through one or more of our senses and had a chance to reflect on the ecological and social systems that are operating around us.

They also discussed the meaning of culture and why it is important to different societies, groups and nations. Looking at the relationship between culture and values, they explored how we can change the way things are done if we put our minds to it. For example, if we look at processes from a sustainability perspective, are there some things we should be doing differently?

The forum also gave YEC members the opportunity to meet their student mentors.

“The mentors have really inspired me just to believe in myself more.”

Grace, YEC member 2016, Yr 7

6.3 Arbury Park Leadership Camp, June

Where can you go in Adelaide these days and still have a campfire, night hike, frog hunt, nature walks, all in a beautiful woodland setting and beneath a full moon?

Forty-four students from around SA attended the year’s Youth Environment Council three day camp run by NRM Education at Bridgewater’s Arbury Park Outdoor School to develop their environmental and leadership skills, meet like-minded people, share ideas and experience nature first-hand. The council encourages students to take action to make a difference in their local schools and community and to promote more sustainable lifestyles.

Project development was a major theme over the three days: working in groups, students brainstormed ideas around their areas of interest. This year the most popular topics were biodiversity and habitat for animals, renewable energy, the preciousness of our resources and waste reduction.

Some really exciting and innovative projects being developed this year were: getting the school and community involved in a grassland revegetation project to help the endangered Pygmy Bluetongue Lizard; making a school canteen palm oil free; and making a movie to educate the community about water conservation.

“I’ve learnt how important it is to save our environment and why we should do it. I’ve also noticed the leadership skills that the mentors have and hoping to become as good as them.”

Tony, YEC member 2016, Yr 7

6.4 YEC Online Forum, June-October

The YEC members were provided the opportunity to interact online throughout half the year to share their project progress, collaboratively problem-solve any project issues that arose, and develop their display ideas for the Sharing and Celebration Forum in Term 4.

6.5 Sharing and Celebration Forum, Cleland Wildlife Park, October

A Sharing and Celebration Forum was held at Cleland Wildlife Park where the students once again came together to share their experiences and host a ‘Project Expo’ showcasing their projects to invited guests, families and NRM Education staff. Each YEC member came to the forum with a project display detailing and showcasing the sustainability project they had been working on during the year.

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 do this through any means they can think of, and explore new ways to raise awareness. In 2016 there were some innovative approaches taken, including:

- conducting surveys across the school and community
- asking the school to vote on their preferred option
- proactive awareness-raising through brochures and posters displayed around the school and community
- speaking to local media including newspaper articles
- delivering presentations and education sessions at school assemblies and in class
- creating Facebook pages and websites.

7.1 The Ripple Effect in Action - Evidence

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



7.1.1 Projects Undertaken by YEC Members:

In 2016, there were 32 projects initiated by students of the YEC to support student voice and action in both school and community contexts. Figure 2, on page 1, shows the breakdown of projects. Projects included:

Biodiversity: raising awareness of endangered plants and animals, creating biodiversity gardens, volunteering with Trees for Life, developing nature play spaces at school, revegetating, installing bollards to protect endangered pale flax lily at Maize Island Conservation park, creating frog ponds, monitoring frogs, fundraising for Cheetah Conservation Fund.

Water: raising awareness on water conservation at home, developed website on issues facing Port, Torrens and Murray Rivers, teaching students how to do creek water testing.

Cultural change and awareness-raising: Kids Teaching Kids event, forming an environmental/sustainability student group, removing products with palm oil from the school canteen.

Waste: bin audit/survey, improving waste management systems, starting nude food days, setting up composting.

Energy: campaigning for more renewable energy in SA, creating a wind turbine model.

Food: setting up aquaponics system at school and fruit orchard.

Case Study: Michela (year 9), Mitcham Girls High School

Michela went to Woodcroft Primary School and was actively involved in their student environment group. When she went to Mitcham Girls High School she realised that there wasn't a similar group at the high school. With the help of a key teacher Michela set up the group last year. This year she has played a lead role in keeping the group together, promoting the opportunity to other students and discussing goals for the group.

The student environment group has a focus on reducing waste at the school. They were involved in doing a waste audit with Wipe out Waste (a KESAB *environmental solutions* program). They found out that lots of paper wasn't going into the recycling and also many students were using zip lock bags. Michela and the group spoke at school assemblies about reducing this. The group also set up 10 cent recycling system at the school. They also successfully applied for a NRM School Action Grant.

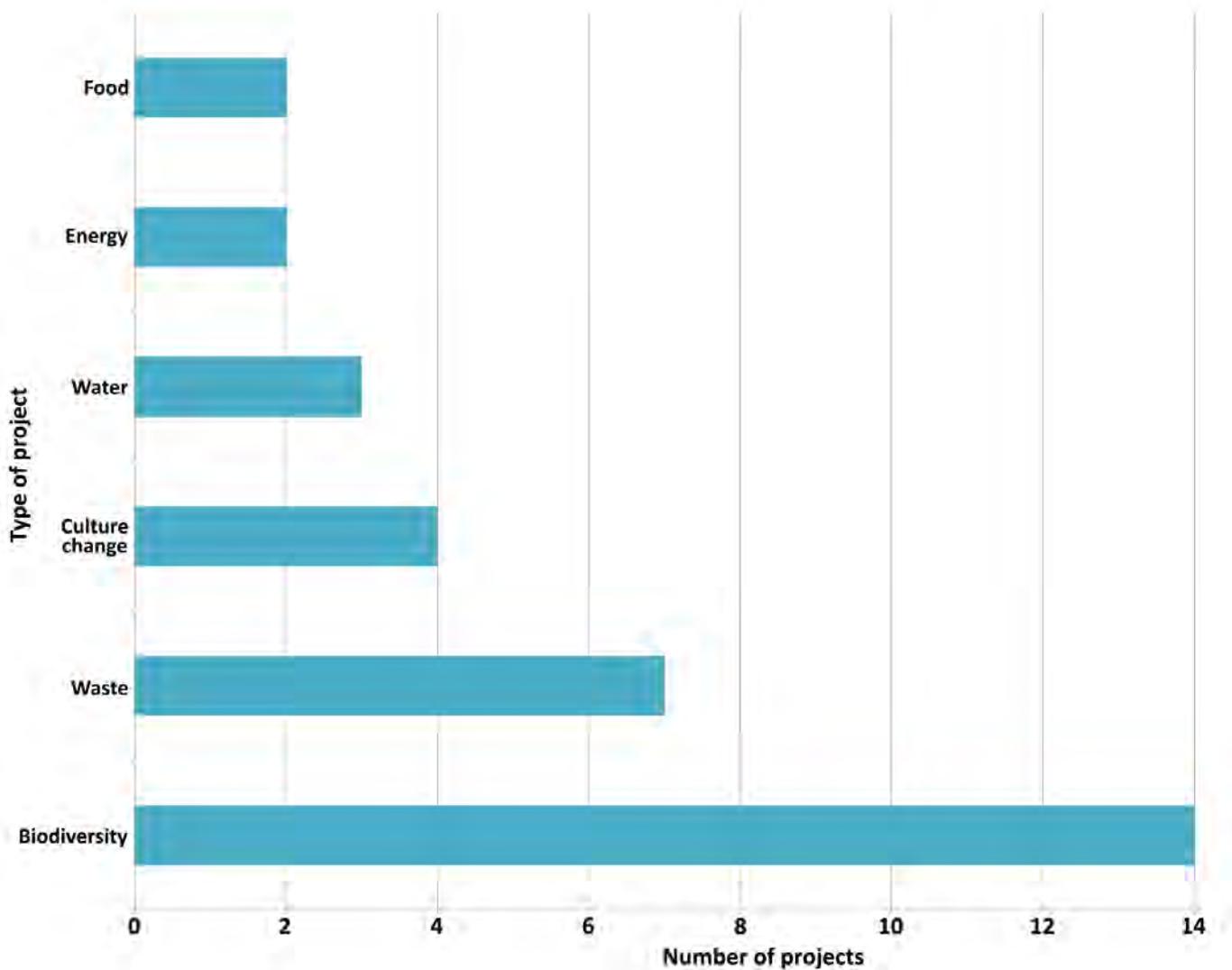


Michela said networking and making connections within the school is really important to project success. Michela thinks she has further developed her leadership skills, persuasion skills and initiative by being a part of the Youth Environment Council.

Michela presented at the Australian Association for Environment Education Conference in Adelaide on youth voice and was voted as most global citizen at the school.

Critical and creative thinking and personal and social capability.

FIGURE 2: Number of projects shared at the Sharing and Celebration Forum



Case Study: Bethany (year 11), Burra Community School

Bethany has a keen interest in conserving small native animals. She goes to Burra Community School which has an agricultural focus. For her YEC project, Bethany did a lot of research about the pygmy blue tongue lizard, which is an endangered species. She found out how to look after them, including growing the plant Iron Grass for habitat. She became involved in the Pygmy Blue Tongue Conservation Association. She has given talks to her school, local farmers and other people in her town about why the pygmy blue tongue lizard is special and how to look after them. By doing this, Bethany said she had gained confidence in talking to people, especially strangers, and is now less shy.

Literacy, information and communication technology capability, personal and social capability.



7.2 Ministerial Support

The Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation and Minister for Education and Child Development were both invited to attend the final Sharing and Celebration Forum at Cleland Wildlife Park. Unfortunately both ministers were unable to attend. However, MP Nat Cook, State Member for Fisher, did attend.

Ms Cook addressed the YEC and spent some time finding out about their individual projects.

This is a very important part of the YEC program each year, as 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.



Case Study: Angus (year 7), Glencoe Central Primary School and Annabel (year 7), Mary McKillop Memorial School

Angus and Annabel decided to do their YEC project together on the Hooded Plovers. Hooded Plovers are coastal birds with a distinctive black hood and throat. They are listed as vulnerable nationally and there are less than 800 of these birds in South Australia. Angus and Annabel researched the Hooded Plover and got in touch with Friends of Shorebirds South East who provided lots of information. They found out that one of the biggest threats to Hooded Plovers is people disturbing them when they are nesting in the sand dunes. Either driving on the beach or not having their dog on the lead.

Angus and Annabel decided to create a poster to put up at the beaches to raise the communities understanding about how they can help protect the hooded plovers. Annabel's cousin works for a sign company and helped print them. They also gave presentations to their schools and were invited to speak at Natural Resources South East board meeting. Angus and Annabel said speaking to 16 adults at the board meeting was really cool and fun and they received positive feedback.

Annabel and Angus said they enjoyed working as a team and now feel more confident in public speaking. They said networking and getting help from others was really important to their project's success.

Information and communication technology capability, critical and creative thinking and personal and social capability.



8.0 Youth Environment Council Evaluation

During 2016, students completed two evaluations; one after the Leadership Camp and another after the Sharing and Celebration Forum at the end of the year. At the end of the year feedback was sought from teachers and parents about their observations of the impact of their student or child's involvement in the YEC. By gathering multiple perspectives there is strong evidence of the outcomes, reach, and value placed upon, the opportunities provided through the YEC.



8.1 Arbury Park Leadership Camp Evaluation

The strong focus of the 2016 camp was on engaging and connecting students around their individual passions and interests, and supporting their capacity to act. The evaluation sought evidence for whether these aims had been met, as well as the overall experience. The majority of students discovered what they were passionate about and how they can create change (90% of 41 responses), and felt confident about making a difference in their school and/or community (95%). All students 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' to being inspired, enjoyed connecting with the outdoors, and liked Arbury Park Outdoor School.

8.2 End of Year Evaluation

The YEC evaluation process asked students to share what skills, opportunities and personal growth they gained from participating in the program:

- team work
- public speaking
- confidence to make a difference
- leadership
- social confidence
- teaching others
- environmental awareness.

"I have become more knowledgeable about the environmental issues we are facing and I strongly feel more confident and capable to create change."

Meagan, YEC Member 2016

Receiving feedback after the Sharing Forum provided insight into what students had been able to achieve within their school, what they have gained from their involvement, feedback about the program, influence over ambitions for the future, perception of their own agency to create change, and to see if and why they would recommend the YEC to friends. Members were also asked what they enjoyed the most during their YEC experience. Their responses included:

- being a mentor
- watching people grow
- forming and strengthening friendships
- becoming confident public speakers
- nature-based activities
- working with members, mentors and staff.

"I enjoyed all of it. Especially the camp and meeting my new friends. The online forum was helpful and an enjoyable way to communicate with fellow YEC members!"

Emily, YEC Member 2016



As in 2015, involvement in the 2016 YEC program cultivated greater self-belief, a support network, and hope for the future - aspects that go beyond what the students hoped they would gain from the experience.

“(I enjoyed) getting to meet new people and sharing our ideas with each other and seeing how everyone’s projects came together.”

Austin, YEC Member 2016

Coupled with their increased knowledge and experience in taking action within their communities, these students now know they have the agency to create the change they want to see.

In addition, through participation in the YEC students felt that:

- a) they were good role models: 97% agreed or strongly agreed, and 3% (1 student) disagreed
- b) they had been empowered to create change in their schools: 100% agreed or strongly agreed
- c) they had been inspired to take action: 100% agreed or strongly agreed
- d) the work they did on camp helped them to plan their project; 85% agreed or strongly agreed, 6% were neutral (2 students), and 9% disagreed (3 students).

“(Since the YEC) I ran an event at school talking about clean energy. Around 20 people turned up so I was very pleased.”

Matylda, YEC Member 2016

“The YEC has shown me that it is definitely possible for young people to take action and make a change, no matter how small that change is.”

Anonymous, YEC Member 2016

Student feedback reflected the YEC’s influence of their ambitions for the future, from their values and everyday actions to their sustainability goals and career choices:

- YEC has helped me realise that I do have the ability to make an environmental change in our world
- I am more aware of what my actions can lead to and it has led me to feel the need to make a difference
- I can’t live my life ignoring the environment like so many people do
- I would like to pursue a career in the environmental sector as an environmental scientist



- I want to make change in my community
- It has influenced me to be focused on the community's change for the better
- I strive every day to help at least one issue, picking up rubbish, planting trees etc.
- Knowing that I do have the capacity to make change at my school/community. I definitely want to follow an environmental path after school.



8.3 Observed Benefits: A Parent's Perspective

All parents were emailed or posted a survey containing four questions:

- What did your child gain from being a part of the YEC? Explain.
- Has your child's involvement in the YEC had an impact on what they do at home or in the local community? If so, please provide examples.
- What helped you to support your child?
- Any other comments...

Twelve parents provided feedback which was invaluable in capturing the depth and breadth of the influence and outcomes of their children's experiences with the YEC over 2016.

Some selected quotes are provided below:

"I think that I have always been aware of environmental issues but seeing it from a young person's perspective helps reinforce this."

Parent of a YEC Member 2016

"Grace found the YEC online forum much easier to use and it was a fantastic tool for all the students to keep in contact, share their progress and encourage each other."

Parent of a YEC Member 2016



"YEC has served to reinforce positive practices and build confidence in challenging non-environmentally sound practices. Leadership at this level is now evident beyond the home environment."

Parent of a YEC Member 2016

“Baylee gained a lot of confidence, independence and knowledge with the YEC program this year. He has made a lot of changes at home and school which I think will continue into his future years. He’s made some long life friends and has enjoyed his experience thoroughly. Also I think the most important thing is he feels he has now made a difference at his school and has a feeling of self-importance.”

Parent of a YEC Member 2016

“The Youth Environment Council has been a great support and confidence boost and I would highly recommend it for any youth interested in our environment and what we can do to maintain it.”

Parent of a YEC Member 2016



A wordle infographic, Figure 3, was created using the keywords and phrases listed by parents about what their child had gained by being a part of the YEC.

FIGURE 3: Parent observations of what children gained from being part of the YEC



8.4 Observed Benefits: A Teacher's Perspective

All teacher contacts for YEC students were emailed a survey containing four questions:

- 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 you to support your student?



Eight teachers provided feedback, which is of real benefit to the YEC organising committee, as these are the people with long term relationships to the students who are able to see changes in skills, attitudes and behaviours within the school setting.

Some selected quotes are provided below which illuminate how the validation, confidence and skills they've gained through their participation in the YEC has created positive benefits and outcomes for them personally, for the student groups they work within, and for their whole school communities.

"Jack mentions frequently his gratitude to the YEC for the opportunity to be on the Council. The opportunities for leadership and outreach he now has through the YEC have greatly enhanced Jack's contributions to our College's sustainability vision."

Teacher of a Member 2016

"It (the YEC) provides these students with a forum to foster and implement their ideas. It also provides them with skills that will be useful later in life."

Teacher of a Member 2016

"I believe that being a part of the YEC is excellent for students to meet up with like-minded individuals across the state who believe that through their ideas and passions can make a change on our planet."

Teacher of a Member 2016

"Anabel's enthusiasm has flowed over to the school especially her classmates she kept them and her teacher informed of what was happening at YEC and the progress of her project."

Teacher of a Member 2016



“Participation in this project has allowed Baylee to participate and pursue a personal interest that he feels is important in his wider world. This project over the course of the year has helped Baylee’s personal, emotional and social wellbeing.”

Teacher of a Member 2016

“Oliver is a kind and considerate student and the YEC has opened his eyes, broadened his horizons and equipped him with knowledge and passion for the environment. Oliver now stands to influence others in a positive light and can use this to develop passion in others and help solve some of the more complex problems of this world.””

Teacher of a Member 2016

9.0 Summary

The continued success of the YEC program in 2016 is evidenced by the students’ own reflections, the benefits their teachers describe, and the feedback of their parents and caregivers.

As always, the student mentors are a crucial ingredient in the success of the council. This mentoring role gives older students the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the program and assist in building and maintaining the supportive and collaborative culture the council has developed.

The mentors also run activities and provide feedback to staff, which ensures high levels of engagement. Another strength of the role is the mentors ability to provide peer-support to members 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 or community, and are given support during the YEC sessions and at their school site. Some projects focus on a local issue, while others look more globally, but all are focussed on improving socio-environmental outcomes.

At the end of the year, students share their research and actions at the Sharing and Celebration Forum, where parents, teachers, members of the NRM Board and the local Member of Parliament, Nat Cook, heard about their projects. This expo-style event allows the students to share their work interactively, which made for some very engaging stalls.

This event provides the opportunity for YEC members to hone their presentation skills, share ideas with each other, and receive recognition for their efforts.

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

- confidence in developing speeches, teamwork and the ability to work with others
- gaining self-confidence and the belief in their own abilities
- 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, which challenges the notion that young people do not have power to create change. Many also mention their desire to pursue careers in the environmental sector.

As a result, their schools and communities have gained young people equipped with skills, dispositions and the knowledge 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 General Capabilities.

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

10.0 YEC Proposal for 2017

10.1 The proposed program for 2017

Date	Event	Intended outcomes
T1 Week 8 Tuesday 21 - Wednesday 22 March	Mentor Camp	<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.
T1 Week 11 Thursday 13 April	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 • Connecting with nature activities • Complete part 1 of Capacity to Act: By the end of the session groups will have documented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What enviro topic we are passionate about • What we want the future to be like • What we already know • The evidence we have • What data/evidence we need to collect • What we need to do before YEC camp.
T2 Week 2	Reminders sent (email/online forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder to create online forum account • Reminder to ask any camp questions online • Reminder to start researching Capacity to Act project questions (listed below) ready to update Online Forum Groups by weeks 5/6.

Date	Event	Intended outcomes
T2 Week 5 Thursday 1 June	Online Forum Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update your Capacity to Act groups with answers on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any groups in your area that are already working on this? • Has anyone at school already started or completed this type of project? • What type of data/evidence did you collect? • What does your data/evidence show? • From this data, what are some specific things you can address in your project? • What do you want to achieve (goals, aims, objectives)?
T2 Week 10 Monday 3 - Wednesday 5 July	YEC Camp	<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 • Work with other students to research an area of interest and develop a plan of action for change in your school or community • Complete part 2 of Capacity to Act: By the end of this session your group will have documented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What we want to achieve • How we will do it • How we work with others • How we will know we are creating change.
T3 Week 2	Reminders sent (email/online forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder to progress Capacity to Act project questions listed below, ready to update Online Forum Groups by week 5/6 • Reminder to ask any Sharing Forum questions online.
T3 Week 5 Thursday 24 August	Online Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Online Forum Groups with Capacity to Act project progress with answers on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The steps/actions taken so far to meet objectives • What we expect to achieve • Which groups from the school are already involved and the skills they provide • How we plan to promote our work • How we plan to make our project relevant to people with different interests and views • How everyone in the project is involved in decision making • How we will know we are achieving what we wanted to.

Date	Event	Intended outcomes
T4 Week 2 Thursday 26 October	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 journey over the year, the impact of the YEC and provide feedback to NRM Education to improve the Council for next year.



11.0 APPENDIX

11.1 2016 YEC Member School Representation

- Aberfoyle Park High School
- Auburn Primary School
- Burra Community School
- Cabra Dominican College
- Clare High School
- Clovelly Park Primary
- Gilles Street Primary School
- Glencoe Central Primary School
- Heathfield High School
- Hills Christian Community School
- Loxton High School
- Mary McKillop Memorial School
- Mitcham Girls High School
- Mt Compass Area School
- Murray Bridge South Primary School
- Ocean View College
- Parafield Gardens R-7 School
- Paralowie R-12 School
- Pedare College
- Pilgrim School
- Port Lincoln Primary School
- Salisbury East High School
- Seaton High School
- St Jakobi Lutheran
- St Joseph's School Tranmere
- St Mary Magalene's School
- St Mary's College
- Trinity College
- Urrbrae Agricultural High School
- Willunga High School

