Tanunda Lutheran Early Learning Centre a leader in outdoor education

Tanunda Lutheran School's Early Learning Centre (ELC) has recently been recognised state wide as a leader in outdoor education.

The ELC was invited to be one of six sites to be highlighted at the National Resources Management Education for Sustainability Showcase at the KESAB Sustainable Communities Awards Ceremony on October 24. The showcase recognises and celebrates the efforts of preschools and early learning centres embedding sustainability into their approach to education.

The ELCs' redevelopment of the ‘Bush Block’ and the introduction of permanent pools of the North Para River has led to the Bush Block becoming a natural learning environment which is integral to teaching and learning about society and the environment in the ELC and the School.

The ELCs' showcase presentation was a great learning experience for other sites, of particular interest was community involvement.

ELC Director Marie Hage explained, “Engagement with the outdoors in the Bush Block empowers children to connect with nature and promotes their social, physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional learning. The variety of experiences available to the children at the ELC outdoors nurtures their innate spirits of inquiry and sustainable thinking dispositions.”

Representing Tanunda Lutheran School at the Awards Ceremony was Principal Darren Stevenson, ELC Director Marie Hage, key planning volunteer, Christine Royal, ELC Educator, Nicole Owen and NRM Education Project Officer, Chris Hall.

Chris Hall noted “wider community engagement has been a hallmark of this project. Tree-planting mornings, busy bees, twilight sessions with campfires, a film evening (Project Wild Thing) and workshops have all brought in and involved many local people and their expertise.”

The development of the Bush Block by the ELC has led to the whole Primary School exploring more sustainable options in regard to the everyday running of the school. The development of Tanunda Lutheran School’s Sustainable Outdoor Learning Environment is a direct result of the ELC leading the way in connecting outdoor learning to the Australian Curriculum.

It is great reward for Marie Hage and the ELC team for the effort and hard work that has gone into redeveloping our Bush Block. With wonderful support and assistance from the NRM and our willing band of volunteers, our Bush Block is widely recognised as an outstanding outdoor learning environment that provides both ELC and Tanunda Lutheran School students with diverse opportunities to learn more about sustainability and nature.

“We feel strongly that it is vital to provide opportunities for children to immerse themselves in nature and to play and have fun in the great outdoors. We are blessed to have the resources at Tanunda Lutheran School to be able to provide these opportunities to both ELC and school students,” stated Mr Stevenson.

Further to the Bush Block, Tanunda Lutheran Early Learning Centre takes a Zero Waste approach to lunchboxes, participating in KESAB’s Wipe Out Waste programme and continually choosing to reduce and reuse waste in a variety of ways throughout their day.

KESAB presented Tanunda Lutheran Early Learning Centre with the Progress and Achievement in Education for Sustainability Award.

Accepting the KESAB award won by Tanunda Lutheran School's early Learning Centre are: Darren Stevenson, Principal TLS; Marie Hage, Director of Early Learning Centre at TLS; Nicole Owen, ELC Educator; Chris Hall, NRM Education Project Officer.