

**Australian Association for Environmental Education – Biennial Conference
September 28 – 30th 2021, Mandjoogordap: Changing Tides Declaration**

Climate Emergency

The Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE) is the peak national body for environmental education across all sectors. For over 50 years, our members have been involved in educating for climate justice and ecological sustainability. AAEE declares that there is a Climate Emergency which requires immediate and decisive action by our political representatives.

AAEE believes that, based on the facts we know today, it would be a breach of our duty of care as environmental educators to continue as though there is not a Climate Emergency. We call on our government to grasp the opportunity – indeed obligation – to show greater leadership on the Climate Emergency facing us all, particularly for young people and future generations.

AAEE urges Australian governments at all levels to take bold, ambitious and effective climate action through the immediate adoption of climate mitigation policies. We demand a climate mobilisation of sufficient scale and speed to protect current and future generations from climate disaster. We declare that now is the time to take action to restore a safe climate and make the transition with the least harm to people, cultures and biodiversity.

This Declaration requires a commitment to Australia’s Carbon Neutrality by 2030 with realistic interim milestones along the journey including science-based targets. To reach net zero by 2030, it is critical that governments, state and national, invest in the infrastructure and the skilled people required to ensure a functioning carbon neutral (or better) society. Fast tracked Research and Development - as was possible with COVID - is needed to achieve net zero emissions. Education is integral to the success of achieving targets and upskilling young people and those already in the workforce.

The Decade of Ecosystem Restoration is an international acknowledgement of ecosystem distress as a direct result of our climate crisis. Australia has suffered the devastating impacts of ecosystem crises with bush fires, floods and extreme weather events. Furthermore, all the Sustainable Development Goals are negatively impacted by the climate crisis. AAEE herewith declares that we stand with all the other bodies calling on the Australian Government for immediate, effective climate action.”

AAEE National Executive
Dr Jennifer Pearson,
President



North Territory Chapter
Convenor,
Mr Graeme Sawyer



Tasmania Chapter Convenor,
Ms Ingrid Albion



Australian Capital Territory
Chapter Convenor, Ms Vivienne
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Queensland Chapter Convenor,
Prof Jo-Anne Ferreira



Western Australian Chapter
Convenor,
Dr Jennifer Pearson



New South Wales Chapter
Convenor,
Ms Sue Martin



South Australian Chapter
Convenor, Ms Naomi Findlay



Education for Sustainability Climate Leadership proposal October 2021

The Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE) is calling on the Australian government to show leadership by supporting a whole of government Education for Sustainability initiative to support the Australian Sustainable Schools Alliance (AuSSA) as it strives to assist with climate leadership and resilience in our school systems working to meet our Sustainable Development Goals as a country.

In 2021 AAEE declares that there is a Climate Emergency which requires immediate and decisive action by our political representatives. AAEE declares that we stand with all the other bodies calling on the Australian Government for immediate, effective climate action.

Background:

The AAEE is the national professional association of environmental educators from all sectors (community, formal and government educators). AAEE provides support to build the capacity of members to create ecologically sustainable communities. AAEE also represents environmental educators in policy discussions and debates and provides recommendations on issues and directions for a sustainable future. For over 40 years, AAEE has worked with government and non-government organisations across Australia in the interests of quality education and environmental change. The AAEE approach to promoting environmental education is positive, cooperative and inclusive.

The AuSSA, created in 2019, was inspired by the work of individual State and Territory initiatives that support schools to embed sustainability across the school community that evolved out of the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI).

AuSSI model: AuSSI has been a significant vehicle for supporting teachers to deliver education for sustainability in Australian schools and provides:

- a unifying framework across Australia for education for sustainability, which has been adapted by each State and Territory to their circumstances.
- a whole-of-school approach including support of the school leadership and engagement with parents and the wider community.

Education for Sustainability opportunities for climate leadership and resilience:

We join the millions of people around our planet who are working to prevent dangerous climate change and regenerate the natural systems on which all life depends. We draw hope and optimism from knowing that we are part of this global community who care and

are taking action to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and drawdown carbon from our atmosphere.

Education for Sustainability Climate Leadership Proposal:

Commit to Commonwealth funding to support the core infrastructure of AuSSA at the level of \$5m per year for 4 years, as part of a renewed national partnership agreement with State and Territory environmental and education authorities; and

This includes:

1. The cost of a national coordinating structure guiding best practice in the use of existing environmental education and education for sustainability resources – avoiding the risk of duplicative and ad hoc investments in different jurisdictions.
2. Enhanced access to useful tools to inform school sustainability plans, adapted to each state and local region, and to best practice education for sustainability resources;
3. Coordination of mentoring and professional development programs for school leaders and teachers;
4. Partnerships with community groups and local businesses – leveraging considerable additional in-kind contributions.

As we look forward, striving to create optimistic and enriching futures for all, the Australian Government has an opportunity to develop climate leadership for education for sustainability (EfS) and therefore we would like to encourage you to consider creating synergies across portfolios, knowing that this was achieved in the past to great effect.

We look forward to collaborating with the Australian government and ensuring our Sustainable Schools initiatives across our states and territories can be beacons within the community for climate leadership.



Dr Jennifer Pearson

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