Sustainability: Practise & passion

Report on an AFSSSE-funded professional development session organised by the SA Chapter of the Australian Association for Environmental Education in partnership with the SA Geography Teachers Association

(1) The session was held at the SA Conservation Centre – explicitly to acquaint educators with the Centre and its resources.

(2) Presenters were:
2.1 Fraser Vickery - has experience of many years in Parks & Wildlife/Natural Resource Management and as an activist in conservation. Fraser is president of SA Conservation Council and of Greening Australia(SA).
His presentation has not been made available in electronic form. It will be forwarded by post as Appendix 1 with a hard copy of this report.
2.2 Michelle Hawthorn – principal of Pt Vincent Primary School, discussed the educational approaches (towards values and personal development) taken by the school in assisting students and their community to be involved in practical environmental activities. Pt. Vincent Primary has won a multitude of awards in recognition of the work of its school and local community.
Appendix 2 is a shortened text version of some of the ideas Michelle presented. It is attached in electronic form, and will be forwarded as hard copy.
Michelle's PowerPoint presentation has not been made available in electronic form. It will be forwarded by post as Appendix 3 with a hard copy of this report.

(3) The list attached as Appendix 3A records the attendees; there were 13 school-based participants.

(4) Appendices 4, 5 & 6 were used to structure small group discussion and response around the following questions:
4.1 Appendix 4 - ' On Suggested approaches'. 5 groups used this pro-forma to respond to questions about their perceptions of: the <u>extent</u> to which these approaches were used in their school; <u>reasons</u> why (or why not) these approaches were (not) used; and <u>what would be needed</u> to promote these approaches to values education in their schools.
Summarised results are available. Section 5 of this report draws on them to respond to questions raised in the brief for this project.
4.2 Appendix 5 - 'On 10 values emerging from Australian School Communities'. 6 groups used this pro-forma to respond to questions about their perceptions of: the <u>extent</u> to which the listed values were present/attended to in the Port Vincent school program as discussed by Michelle Hawthorn; <u>reasons</u> why the values were (or were not) present; and what <u>would be needed</u> to promote attention to the values**.**
Summarised results are available. Section 5 of this report draws on them to respond to questions raised in the brief for this project
4.3 Appendix 6 - 15 participants completed a pro-forma to assist presenters evaluate the session. Summarised results are presented as Appendix 6. Section 5 of this report draws on them to respond to questions raised in the brief for this project

5   Key issues, teaching strategies and resources in values education.
5.1 <u>Key issues</u>
• re 'approaches'

The approach of	is attended to adequately when	if it is to be adequately addressed requires
School planning	• assumptions are not made that middle class schools have an homogeneous set of values • an holistic approach is taken, as occurs in Christian schools (although they might not have clear plans about 'ecological' values • the 'standardised curriculum' does not take over • teachers, in cooperation with parent groups, recognise the importance of values education • the Curriculum Committee includes values in its planning • time can be found in the often lengthy proceedings of Parent Councils	• appropriate school/community interaction • that teachers appreciate that they have permission to attend to values • belief in 'intergenerational equity' *(not sure if the author is referring to 'fairness from one generation to the next'–the standard sustainability 'use' of the term–or cooperation between young and older people)* • explicit attention to eg definition, review, reflection • statement of a cleat set of values by each school that relate to it & its practices
Local development	• there are adequate time, human & other resources available • staff overcome their reluctance (sometimes) to bring 'outsiders' in • as above for Parent Councils	• better communication between community personnel & staff • appointment of a liaison person between school & community • increased availability of financial resources so that teachers have time to consult with the community and/or & of people to liase with the community • more direction & support for teachers in this interaction
Whole school approach	• the effectiveness of good intentions is not impeded by other day-to-day priorities • values education moves from being equated with 'being good' to developing social conscience • values education is an integral part of school management • student representation (reporting back to an SRC) occurs in all major decision-making bodies eg School Council, Curriculum Committee, Finance Committee	• greater incentives & support so that this is given highest priority • that there be adequate time for teachers to deal with • more appreciation of 'kid thinking' & more listening to students • more time to collate/document where values education occurs in individual subjects so that this can guide future planning & application • working as a group on the broad picture i.e. beyond the limits of one subject area
Safe & supportive learning environment	• schools are able to work effectively with adolescents • students are involved in reviewing *(critiquing?)* approaches to this • its explicitly programmed for–& not piecemeal (despite being promoted as a function of the school) • there is a whole-school basis, not	• support for the development of a greater emphasis on this • smaller class sizes

	merely in curriculum areas	
Partnership with parents & community	• adequate representation of the community to the school occurs • there is accountability about where information from consultation goes • the school's broader community is itself 'connected' • there exists <u>real</u> conversations, exploration & expansion of this	• more involvement with the community, not just consultation • involvement of community explicitly in values education, not just an assumption that it happens by osmosis • that this be presented in 'enlightened', non-challenging ways to conservative/aging staff who resent 'outsiders' telling them, as professionals, what they should be doing
Support for students	• peer support systems are established • student management is pro-active, rather than merely responsive to issues if/when they occur • it's not limited to students at risk (& the ways that happens are often not fully supported by staff)	• in-service training *(professional development?)* in providing appropriate activities for students; workshops run by experts from beyond the system • more carefully thought through programs • that a broad range of staff opinion be sought
Quality teaching	• there is time available to establish this in a long term & ongoing manner • this area is openly explored, celebrated & published so that it's up-front • support is available to <u>all</u> teachers–& is an explicit priority of school administration	• giving the issue higher priority & providing support so that a permanent culture can be established • that more resources be made available • that constructivist processes be applied so that values students identify with can be built on • schools get past assuming that teachers will deal with this effectively at an individual level–so that consistent messages can be passed on • that administrators encourage ongoing professional development as a matter of course whether staff are short- or long- term appointees

• re '10 values'

The value of	**is attended to adequately when**	**if it is to be adequately addressed requires**
Tolerance	• there are clearly assigned roles for all, including disabled people *(the author is considering to only a limited extent the kinds groups to whom tolerance might be extended!)* • placed in an economic perspective i.e. is seen to have a 'pay-off' • <u>all</u> people are extended tolerance–	• more time *(this comment appeared frequently in the following values; it is not repeated here)* • an integrated curriculum focussed organised at a whole-school level *(this comment was added by the same author to most of the 10 values)* • the use of role plays

	even those whom environmentalists consider to be misusing the environment • it is explicitly recognised as necessary if a group is to 'get along'	• that links be made to other places/cultures • well-trained & well-resourced educators
Respect	• people are encouraged (supported?) in their attempts to work together; efforts are made to build capacity for team-work, within the school, and between it and its community • the value is embedded in the school ethos, rather than being spelt out • educators/students are not entrenched in dominant power structures	• appropriate professional development for older, more entrenched teachers
Responsibility	• guidance & leadership from a committed principal is available • a series of clear focus points eg.: natural environment; built environment; town and societal relationships • school communities are assisted: to develop their attitudes, to change their behaviours; to see that there are consequences to choices; to become empowered to make differences	• the development of kits assisting schools to appreciate the nature and extent of their heritage and communities • better-developed partnerships between : local council; developers; conservation groups; school council • more money *(not surprisingly, this item appeared frequently)* • recognition of, and better allocation of, responsibilities among teachers in a school • more information about: changes *(in natural and constructed environments)* over time; human actions eg littering etc
Social justice	• schools focus on <u>people</u>, and not just environments • sustainability is dealt with right up to senior levels • the links are made to the positive economic consequences of this • system-wide intentions & actions • differentials between sometimes middle-class educators and working class families are managed with empathy by the school • funding bodies have appropriate objectives	• flexible time-tabling especially at senior school levels • long-term availability of human resources, rather than on a project-by-project basis. Allows follow through
Excellence	• there is an appropriate balance between humanism *(empathy?)* & striving for excellence • students are encouraged to focus on relevant tasks • all students are provided with opportunities to achieve & feel valued	• simpler accountability standards permitting more creative ways of developing curriculum • some consistency & longevity of programs, finding common goals

	• there is encouragement, awards for positive behaviour	
Care	• there is an intention to be <u>people</u> positive • attention is given to self-esteem & the desirability of a happy, clean, sustainable world for everyone	• attention to cost-benefit analysis of caring *(for people <u>and</u> environments?)*
Inclusion & trust	• there is a balance between school concerns eg environment <u>&</u> people • efforts are made to utilise students' backgrounds & their knowledge-building, & build their sense of efficacy & responsibility	• explicit building of social group skills, team work and group learning strategies
Honesty	• taking action is accompanied by eduction in moral/ethical decision-making • collecting a& collating information is carefully carried out • community leaders (eg federal politicians) model it	• explicit education in moral/ethical decision-making • attention to understanding 'shades of grey', as well as unscrupulousness re eg the environment • professional development for teachers ion how to assist students deal with saturation messages from wider community
Freedom	• social equity is discussed fully • standing up for the rights of others includes other species • rights & responsibilities involves 'real life' issues such as littering	• obvious exploration of the way today's decisions affect the right to a clean, safe environment for those who follow
Being ethical	• education in decision-making is included • both social & environmental issues are discussed • community commitment & ethical standards/moral codes are discussed • economic interests are recognised as not having primacy • opportunities are available to look at caring for all environments & species	• access to case studies
Ecological justice	• environmental decision-making is not seen as inferior to Cartesian *(rational?)* • emphasis is given to multiculturalism as well as environmentalism • student-friendly terms are used eg <u>not</u> 'Earth entities' • there is opportunity to discuss whose power positions are dominant • students appreciate that they are working towards a better Earth • schools/people recognise that it is part of their mission to restore, preserve & conserve resources	• frameworks are available which include environmental & social systems • more opportunity for experiential learning in outdoor environments • greater staff education & encouragement to work in this way

5.2 <u>Teaching strategies</u>
Because of the experiences of the presenters the teaching strategies discussed centred around experiential, problem-solving approaches–as necessary to values education

5.3 <u>Resources</u>
The most useful resources were seen to be the kinds of case studies that could be provided by schools with similar success stories to that of Port Vincent Primary School. Places such as the Conservation Centre were seen as needing promoting to teachers.