

Best Practice Sustainability Education & Engagement

Towards Clean, Green Central Coast Canteens

A project by Central Coast Environmental Education Network

Visit www.aaeensw.org.au to learn more about this project



This project used incentives to educate and engage 34 Central Coast schools and canteens on the issue of single-use plastics, resulting in behaviour changes that have reduced waste to landfill, playground litter and stormwater pollution.

In late 2017, members of the Central Coast Environmental Education Network launched the 'Central Coast Green Canteen Challenge' to primary and high schools in their region. The project team reached their stakeholders by tapping into four existing networks, with educators from Rumbalara Environmental Education Centre, Kariong Eco Garden and Take 3 giving presentations at the meetings of: Primary School Canteen Managers; High School Canteen Managers; Primary School Principals; and the Central Coast Healthy Gardens.

At these events over 90 canteen managers, principals and teachers were educated about single-use plastics and the impacts they have on our oceans. A free gift of wooden forks, spoons or paper

“Working with the project team has been a great experience. Our planning time connected us closely and increased our desire to reduce waste on the Central Coast as a team.”

Christine Freeman, Rumbalara Environmental Education Centre

“Green Canteens has been an amazing collaborative project that has pulled together diverse stakeholders with a common interest and allowed us to engage directly with canteen managers and give them a voice in this plastic waste debate.”

Roberta Dixon, Take 3



“How green is your canteen?” has been a really positive collaboration and feels like the beginning of something. I am really happy that we have taken a reward approach to the issue and that our message has been ‘small steps in the right direction’.”

Lisa Wriley, Kariong Eco Garden

straws to trial in the canteen was offered to schools that completed an online survey about their canteen’s use of plastic items, their recycling practices and common types of litter in the playground.

A further incentive was offered to canteen managers who accepted the challenge to reduce single-use plastics, that involved points being allocated for adopting new behaviours. Canteen managers who achieved four or more points went into a draw to win a ‘Pamper Pack’, a clever enticement to meet the needs of the target audience of hard-working women.

By the end of Term 2 2018, 47% of school canteens had participated in the challenge and adopted the following new behaviours: 69% phased out plastic straws; 56% replaced plastic cutlery with compostable cutlery; 38% replaced plastic or styrofoam packaged items with sustainable packaging such as paper wraps, bees wax wraps or cardboard trays; and 38% talked to their food suppliers about plastic packaging alternatives. 69% of schools also adopted other changes, including phasing out bottled water and requesting no plastic bags with their food deliveries from a major supermarket.

Wooden plaques were awarded to the winning canteens and due to the momentum created by the challenge, program collaborators are continuing to support schools to reduce plastic use and the 2018 Schools Environment Award given by Central Coast Council is focussing on reducing single use plastics.



This project has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust.