



Sustainable Cities 2012 – ACT

Recipient: Merici College. Years 7 -12 Catholic Girl's College

Location: Baddon, suburb of Canberra

Category: Community Action and Partnerships

The Merici College is committed to reducing its carbon foot print and encouraging the school community and broader community to adopt sustainable practices. The school has adopted a range of sustainability initiatives; such as encouraging the use of renewable energy by getting solar panels, reducing water consumption, promoting recycling and teaching sustainability.

The Kitchen Garden Program began as an SRC initiative designed to promote community partnerships. Over time the Program has relationships with a range of community members and programs as follows:

- The Year 9's built a relationship with Black Mountain School, and this has expanded to include a mentor/volunteer scheme by year 10 girls which brings disabled young people into the school every day. Together they volunteer in the canteen and garden. This scheme has been tied into the Religious Education course with the support of the CEO and has also been recognized in the community, with various awards.
- The SRC cook each year for the Malkara Fete. Malkara is a primary school for students with disabilities.
- The Merici College students have built up relationships with Disability ACT and the Chamber of Commerce as well as Jacky Ryles from Capital Careers, who delivers Disability Awareness Training to our new batch of mentors each year.
- The year 10 girls began cooking meals for Karinya House with their parents. Karinya is a home for pregnant or parenting women and their families in crisis.
- The students and their parents cook for OZ Harvest, renamed the Yellow Van. The students cook 80 to 100 Take Away meals 6 times a year and they are picked up and delivered to deserving people. At Christmas time we make hundreds of packages of Christmas treats to be given away.
- Since 2011 Merici College has been a part of an ACT program called Switched On Schools. The program provides the school with two young adult mentors who work with the students to develop and conduct environmental projects.
- Switched On Schools has relationships with a large variety of schools in Canberra and they host annual events which bring the schools together. Merici College has sought every opportunity to be involved in these events and has done workshops on their Kitchen Garden Program for students from other schools for the past two years.
- Merici College has recently welcomed the invitation to become one of ten 'model schools' for the Healthy Schools, Healthy Children Initiative. This initiative will provide an opportunity to mentor other schools interested in adopting healthy and sustainable eating practices.
- The Merici College hosted lunch and a tour/workshop of their Kitchen Garden Program to several different schools this year as part of the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative, Eco-Bus Tours.

Category: 'Dame Phyllis Frost' Litter Prevention

The Merici College plays an important role in establishing an effective recycling system. Initiative and programs include:

Reduce

- Sourcing food from their garden minimises on packaging coming into the school when the buy produce minimal packaging or recyclable packaging is taken into consideration.
- All bottled drinks and vending machines have been removed from the school and in their place are free water in reusable cups, water coolers and Keep Cups for seniors.

Reuse

- All organic matter produced in the canteen or staff rooms are composted.
- All food from the canteen is served on ceramic plates and eaten with stainless steel cutlery.

Recycle

- A student from the school's volunteer Environmental Sustainability Team was successful in her application for a NAB Schools First Student Award. This award will provide the funds for the school to place recycling stations (paper, recycling and waste bins that sit next to each other) around the school.

Category: Environmental Innovation and Protection

Highlights include:

- Students are learning how to grow their own vegetables and think about how these skills can be used to create more sustainable communities
- The school canteen has a no-waste policy. All food is served on ceramic plates and eaten with stainless steel cutlery, packaging is minimised or recycled, and all food produced is composted and used in the garden beds.
- The canteen uses produce from the garden, and when necessary sources local and sustainable food.
- Every item that is sold in the canteen is made on the premises with food that is as seasonal as possible. This allows the school to know what their students are eating.
- Encourage learning to minimise water use in land management, particularly through the Indigenous Garden.
- The garden is currently undergoing an expansion to include a chicken shed, christened Cluckingham Place.

Category: Water Conservation

The Merici College uses the Kitchen Garden Program to model and teach about water conservation through the following initiatives:

- The school is linked into a bore, from which they can extract 4 mega litres per year. This water is used on the ovals, vegetable gardens and flower patches.
- The school has installed water efficient toilets and taps around the school. A meter mate has been installed to allow staff to show their students how much water they are using.
- Merici College has partnered with local elders from the area to design and plant an Indigenous Garden. The Garden is full of bush tucker and native plants which are used to help students learn about Indigenous culture and water efficient land management practices.

Category: Young Legends

Over the past year Merici College established a Kitchen Garden Program. This comprises several large garden beds which are used to grow produce for the schools canteen. The school is seeking to demonstrate how sustainability relates to all aspects of our world and is best understood in a holistic

manner. The canteen offers students and staff healthy, cheap, locally sourced, freshly cooked meals and snacks on a daily basis.

Educational Benefits

Merici College views the garden as a hub for learning and encourages every Faculty to integrate it into their teaching. By offering every student and teacher the opportunity to volunteer in the garden they can learn how to produce their own vegetables and fruit and this often leads to innovative thinking about how sustainable communities can be created.

The school offers a sustainability elective which allows student to spend time working in the garden each week and back in the class room they relate it to concepts around local sustainability and food systems. The senior hospitality classes learn how to plan and prepare seasonal meals is included in their CERT qualifications by using the produce to cook meals which are sold at the canteen. Students have the use of a green house to propagate seedlings which are planted in the garden. The school is also creating an Indigenous Garden to encourage a cross-cultural understanding of land management and food production.

Creating Community

Merici College is committed to ensuring that the garden can be used to create a community that is committed to sustainability and stretches beyond the walls of the school. Every week special needs students from the Black Mountain School are mentored by the Year 10 students. Activities are focused on spending time in the garden and kitchen to prepare the fresh food for cooking.

The Merici College also seeks opportunities to share their experience with other schools, learn from them and support them to establish Kitchen Garden Programs. This year they have participated in the EcoBus Tour by visiting other schools and hosting a lunch and tour for 60 students from several secondary schools. The students will present two presentations at the two Kids Teaching Kids Conferences this year.