

Tackling climate change and its impact on health

Case Study: Youth-led Sustainable Solutions



Background

The youth-led Sustainable Solutions project extended from April to August 2023 and was implemented as part of the VicHealth Local Government Partnership to co-design social connection opportunities with young people, with a focus on local sustainability solutions.

Project Description

Issues of mental wellbeing and responses to climate change have consistently been raised by children and young people through City of Ballarat consultations including Ballarat: Our Future and for the Youth Strategy. This project supported years 5 and 6 students from St James' Parish School to build resilience and leadership skills through direct training and self-directed, action-based learning to design solutions to environmental issues. [Link to video of the project](#)

The youth-led Sustainable Solutions project was a collaboration with Sustainability Victoria's Resource Smart Schools program and community experts to expand student's knowledge of sustainability, particularly issues associated with waste, water, energy, and biodiversity. Educators from Eureka Centre's School Program were also key partners supporting students to learn about civic engagement, ways to effect social change, and how to apply this to design local sustainability solutions. Students participated in eight workshops over five months, working in groups to engage with local experts and take a lead in developing solutions to local issues. The students then pitched their ideas (listed below) at a final event held at the Eureka Centre in front of family, friends, and partner representatives.

Issue	Idea
Too much waste in schools	Produce a song aimed at students 'Do the Right Thing'
Litter in Ballarat	Produce an education book about reducing waste for each school in Ballarat
Saving Bees	Design and produce a 'Bee Friendly' tag for plant nurseries to promote to consumers to buy bee friendly plants
Recycle Plastic	Collect bottle tops and design a product for Zero Plastics
Energy Waste	Black out hour website for schools
Recycling batteries	Battery bins in Ballarat schools
Rubbish at the Yarrowee Creek	Rubbish collection festival with local schools – repurpose rubbish into artworks
Reducing the number of cars on the roads in Ballarat	Bike safety
Water Waste	A water saving board game – with board pieces made of recycled plastics by Zero Plastics
Planting trees	Make a video to encourage more tree planting

Project Outcomes

The project delivered the following outcomes:

- Developed children's knowledge of sustainability within the areas of waste, water, energy and biodiversity
- Developed children's knowledge of civic engagement and social change
- Built connections between students, council staff and community organisations
- Improved student leadership and cohesion
- Improved student relationships through support and encouragement
- Increased understanding and skills for students to lead change and contribute to their community