

Forming a sustainability team

You can start a sustainability team on your own but it's easier, more fun and helpful to have other parents on board to support you on the journey.

Find your tribe

Parents

It is highly likely there are parents besides yourself at the school who are concerned and want to take action on climate change. The only way to find them is to start talking about it. Try drop off and pick ups, class drinks or join the P&C and speak up!

Teachers and support staff

It's important to have at least one staff member supporting you. Find out if any are already championing this initiative. A science teacher keen on composting and recycling? A health teacher concerned about the health risks associated with pollution?

Students

You may also want to start a club for the students and have them input ideas.

Approach the school

Research

Sustainability is a cross-curriculum priority at all Australian schools. Research what your school is already doing. If there is no sustainability team, find out if there ever was, what they did and why they stopped. Often when parents leave so does the enthusiasm because the teachers/principals don't have time.

Proposal

Write to the principal or P&C detailing why you want to start a parental sustainability team and student club. Outline clear objectives and outcomes. You may like to base it on the sample vision document provided.

Follow-up

Arrange a face to face meeting with the Principal or P&C to explain the importance of embedding sustainability into the school culture. Bring your supporters to show unity.

If it doesn't work the first time, try again. Don't give up. Wear them down. The most important thing is making it an easy win for them. Show them how much they will save by reducing their water/energy/waste costs. Show them how the school can be a leader in the community with new sustainable initiatives.

Get your team up and running

- Once you've been given the okay from the school to proceed, discuss your team structure. Which teachers and parents will be joining the team and who will you be approaching/reporting to with proposals?
- Set up meetings that work for everyone. Once a month or one a term? Meet before school starts in the mornings? Or a zoom call from home in the evenings? Get these in the diary for the entire year.
- At your first team meeting, discuss priorities and target your top three. Then research how you can fund and implement them before approaching the principal or P&C.
- Find out your team's individual strengths and, if you have enough people, consider forming working groups based on interests and expertise.
- Your last meeting of the year should set you up for the following year. Keep the ideas rolling! There is so much you can do.

Plan for the future

- One day your kids will be grown and you'll not be a parent at the school any longer. Make sure you recruit new interested parents or teachers to keep the team going long after you are gone. Ask to speak at the Kindergarten orientation every year. Explain what your team does and ask for interested parents to contact you.
- Ask if you can have some space on the school's website to showcase what the school is doing in regards to sustainability along with your contact details so it's easy for people to contact you.