

FIVE STAR SCHOOL



After three years of hard work, St Mary's Catholic Primary School Warracknabeal received a Five Star ResourceSmart energy efficiency award on Saturday, May 27. The school has achieved Five Star status because it has embraced sustainability across several areas including energy and water efficiency, waste reduction and improvements to biodiversity.

On the morning of the celebration we warmly welcomed Ms Audrey Brown, Dr Susan Crowe and Mr Chris Robarts from Catholic Education Ballarat, Mr Graeme Massey, Mayor of Warracknabeal, various councillors, Mr Simon Hum, ResourceSmart and Sustainability

Victoria Project Officer, principals and staff from the various local schools, Mr Paul Lehmann, Resource Smart Schools Facilitator, Assessor and Regional Coordinator, Ms La Vergne Lehmann, families, extended families, students, staff and friends.

Grampians Central West Waste and Resource Acting Executive Officer, La Vergne Lehmann said that St Mary's was only one of twelve Five Star schools in Western Victoria. St Mary's is also the first school in the state to receive this Award in 2017.

St Mary's received a \$10000 Energy Efficiency grant in 2014 to start the ResourceSmart journey. The school has since updated their infrastructure to be as environmentally sustainable as possible, adapted the curriculum to include sustainability in the learning activities and empowered the students to drive change within the school environment. St Mary's students said the ResourceSmart program made it possible for them to build a garden and share in the food that is grown. The school has also saved \$16.79 per student in electricity over the past year. St Mary's rarely pays an energy or water bill because of solar energy generation and the collection of water in our tanks.

Ms Audrey Brown and Dr Susan Crowe both shared some words of praise and encouragement for students, staff and our families. Mr Simon Hum, from Sustainability Victoria presented the Five Star Award to our year 6 students.



In response to the presentation, Mrs Joy Quarrell stated,

“Part of the Mission of our school is stewardship. We strive to make of this world a Good News planet for all. Our intentional focus on sustainability through ResourceSmart has enabled us to take small steps towards creating a Good News sustainable St Mary’s School.

On behalf of our whole school community I would like to congratulate and thank our senior students. They have shown inspiring leadership skills that all other students across the school have embraced.

I would also like to thank our past students. We have been on this journey for a number of years, so we also need to recognise their contributions. Some of these students have transitioned to Warracknabeal Secondary College and have become leaders in sustainability there too. In Warracknabeal all our schools work closely together and this is another example of this relationship.

I wish to acknowledge the work of our dedicated staff. We are a small school and to have the commitment of all is extremely important.

I believe at St Mary’s we have a culture that embraces sustainability. If you asked one of the students, they could talk about our worm farm, the chickens, recycling, upcycling, nude food etc. None of these elements is a focus on any one day. It is an integral part of our everyday living.

A random walk through the school will show that we have approximately 95% of children (and families) every day having nude food. This is an example of just what we do. We are energy conscious – it is part of who we are. These practices are and will continue to be sustainable. When Paul Lehmann pulls back on his support we can assure him that we will continue with sustainable practices as this is who we are – it is embedded practice.

Clearly, we partner with our families and we thank them for their support. Our families can be relied upon to help us out in any way at all. Thank you. In conclusion, I would like to thank Paul and La Vergne for their support and passionate approach to keeping us on track with the modules.

When we reflect on the last three or four years there is just so much to celebrate. Thanks to Simon from



Sustainability Australia for travelling from Melbourne to be with us on Saturday. The whole of our school community appreciate your efforts.

On a personal note I wish to thank those from Catholic Education and the whole of the Warracknabeal community for your presence and support. We are most appreciative of your ongoing support. We feel proud and privileged to be part of the wider Warracknabeal community. Thank you and well done to our entire school community”.

We were blessed on the day to have a phone link up with Costa (Gardening Australia). How special! We look forward to attending the celebrations at Warracknabeal Secondary College soon and then at Warracknabeal Primary School. We are aiming to be the first town to have three Five Star schools. When this happens we will be an extremely proud community.

Joy Quarrell - Principal

The children’s thoughts regarding our ResourceSmart Journey.....

Highs of the ResourceSmart Schools Program -

- The change in our school culture, less waste and more awareness of how we can help the environment,
- Achieving each star - moving towards the five stars,
- Building our garden, maintaining it, picking food to share with the School Community and knowing the garden will always be there,
- Meeting Costa and sharing his expertise while planting the Legacy Garden,
- We have saved \$16.79 per student in electricity over the last 12 months,
- Building a connection with the Warracknabeal Community Garden through Costa’s visit,
- Being able to work with Paul Lehmann, the Legend!
- Nude Food

What St. Mary’s has achieved through the ResourceSmart Schools Program -

- Reduced our impact on the environment,
- Doing Bin Audits to ensure we are putting the rubbish and recycling in correct bins,
- Installed a worm farm for scraps (chooks were already established),
- Reduced our bills and are still \$900 in credit for electricity,
- Built and maintained a Legacy Garden,
- Year 6 students received wristbands to show their commitment to Sustainability,
- Investigated and received stars for the five modules of Core, Energy, Waste, Water and Biodiversity,
- Meeting Costa and spending time with him,
- Collecting produce from the Legacy Garden and giving to our School families,
- Installing solar panels,
- Becoming Paul’s Energy Efficient People - PEEP’s