

What are the benefits to the school?

The benefits to schools are summarised as follows :

- The school will save considerable money in waste disposal, and excess water and energy bills.
- There will be an improvement of the image, appearance and 'marketability' of the school.
- Students and teachers will be empowered to work on real-world problems and outcomes. A feeling of personal control and empowerment is a vital factor of success in a rapidly changing world.
- There are numerous opportunities for students to achieve learning outcomes across all VELs domains, in particular IT, the Arts, Mathematics, Science, Geography, History, English, and Outdoor Education while working in a 'real life' context.
- Student leadership models can be easily adapted to environmentally linked outcomes.

Each module includes professional development and curriculum planning sessions to help staff construct and resource units of work, plan and implement small projects and work towards module accreditation. RSS can also work with students through their tailored incursion program.

How can I get involved?

Any parents or members of the Chatham community are welcome to be involved—just contact Chatham Vice-Principal Marion McAuliffe on 9830 1933 or Chatham Sustainability Committee Convenor Fiona Armstrong on 0438 900 005.

What is the Sustainable Schools (RSS) program?

This program has been developed to help Victorian schools minimise waste, save energy and water, promote biodiversity, and cut their greenhouse gas emissions.

The sustainable schools program is the generic name for the resource that is provided by CERES on behalf of the Department of Sustainability and Environment to develop **ResourceSmart Schools**.

It will replace the Waste Wise and AUSSI certification schemes that operated until 2008.

The program is voluntary in Victoria, and encouraged through guidelines written for Victorian principals.

Chatham has been fortunate enough to gain acceptance into the Resource Smart Schools program, making it one of just 60 schools in Victoria to do so. This program will help improve the school's environmental footprint as well as facilitate the integration of units on sustainability and the environment into the curriculum.

Sustainability and Chatham Primary

The Resource Smart Schools Program

Essentially the program offers program support to schools in three key areas:

Operations
Curriculum
Community

Resources include: Professional Development Program for teachers (and parents) covering modules on Waste, Water, Energy, and Biodiversity; an online energy use tracking system (SETS); a Save Energy at School CD; and the services of a professional mentor from CERES (Eric Bottomley) to support the implementation of the program.

To implement the program and become a sustainable school, the program obliges schools to develop a policy on sustainability and incorporate the aspirations of the school with regard to sustainability into the school's strategic plan. It also encourages and provides support for the incorporation of sustainable initiatives into every aspect of the schools operation, curriculum and community activities.

Through the program, Chatham is offered information on a range of tools to assist the school to begin to evaluate its environmental footprint. Without this it is difficult to evaluate improvement, so this ("where are we now") is a very important aspect of the process towards sustainability to help identify "where we want to go" e.g. Becoming carbon neutral; identifying a target percentage reduction in greenhouse gas emissions/reduced energy use/reduced water use/reduced waste/etc.

The program also provides an overview of the science driving the need for action to improve our environmental sustainability, with compelling evidence on our use of resources here in Victoria, as individuals in Australia, and as global inhabitants.

Benefits of the program

Some examples of the benefits of the Resource Smart Schools Program is evident in some of the case studies from schools already involved.

For example, after undertaking the energy module and instituting some energy efficiency initiatives (no investment required), Hastings Primary School (260 kids) has reduced their energy bill by \$3,000 per annum.

Westernport Secondary College is now saving 50% of their former energy, water and waste costs.

How did Chatham get involved?

The school applied for funding to undertake the Professional Development Modules and signed a memorandum of commitment to say we will complete the program and implement it. The grants are very competitive and the program is extremely popular, so Chatham is very lucky to be one of only 60 schools in Victoria who are enrolled.

Some things to consider in relation to environmental sustainability:

If all the resources of the world were equitably shared, a fair share of earth's resources would entitle each person to less than 2 hectares of land per person.

In Victoria, the current share of resources being used is around 8 hectares per person. In Europe it is about 4 hectares per person.

The ways in which we can reduce our impact on the environment and live sustainability (that is using the resources available to us in such a way that they will continue to be available for future generations) is to:

- reduce our use of energy and other natural resources;
- stabilise population growth; and
- make clever use of technology i.e. use renewable (clean, zero emissions) technology.

