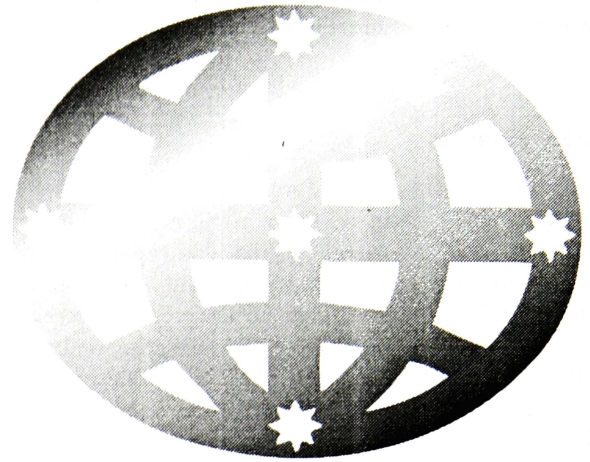


# The Allen Strom Eureka Prize for Environmental Education 2000 and 2001

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In the five years since the NSW Environment Protection Authority sponsored the first \$10,000 Allen Strom Eureka Prize for Environmental Education, there has been a perceptible climate change in the context for environmental education. Although the aim of the award—‘to encourage and reward excellence in the design, implementation and evaluation of environmental education programs’—remains relevant and has not been amended since 1997, many readers might be asking, ‘what, no mention of sustainability?’

Those who promote education for sustainability (Efs) see it as a powerful and embracing framework for environmental education and their efforts have gained momentum within a number of critical areas: in the professional and research literature (including, of course, the *AJEE*), within policies at international, national, state and local levels, and within professional discourses and practices. However, Efs has rolled out very much as a work in progress and there is, as yet, no orthodoxy (thankfully!) about exactly what the term encompasses.

In this context, one of the most valuable functions that the Allen Strom Eureka Prize can serve is as a showcase for assessing various interpretations and designs for Efs. The prize-winning projects for 2000 and 2001—the Australian Master TreeGrower Program and the Gould League Wildscape website respectively (see the articles that follow)—exemplify best practice in Efs. Clearly, these projects involve much more than knowledge transfer. They engage participants closely in ideas and practices concerning interdependence, citizenship, the needs and rights of future generations, diversity, quality of life, equity and justice and a healthy respect for uncertainty and precaution.

The prize-winners, the finalists, and many of the other entrants that were worthy but unable to be recognised, should be congratulated for their conscious engagement with fundamental questions about EFS and quality education. These programs seek to operationalise the process of finding answers to key questions about how education contributes to a sustainable world, and indeed, what participants think a sustainable world could be.

The Allen Strom Prize for Environmental Education celebrates the achievements of all educators whose commitment is to facilitating social change towards sustainability, and the NSW Environment Protection Authority is pleased to be associated with it as sponsor. The Australian Master TreeGrower Program and the Gould League are outstanding providers of EFS. I trust they will stimulate much interest and discussion.

## 2000 Finalists

*Australian Master TreeGrower Program* (Department of Forestry, Institute of Land and Food, University of Melbourne); see article following.

*CALM Bushrangers* (Department of Conservation and Land Management, Western Australia): This program provides secondary school students with hands-on experience working on particular environmental projects being undertaken by CALM. Participants commit 3 hours per week per year to working on the projects.

*Growing up in Cities—Australia* (Faculty of Education, Monash University): Created as part of the international Growing Up in Cities project coordinated through UNESCO, this project involves young people and children in identifying issues, clarifying values and coming up with proposed courses of action to make their neighbourhoods safe and pleasant places to live in. The project aims to build partnerships between young people, government officials and urban planners.

*Swan River Education Kit* (Water & Rivers Commission, Perth WA): This kit uses a constructivist learning approach where knowledge is created through active participation in experiments, investigation, observation and discussion. The kit aims to enrich teaching and study in Science and Society and Environment by providing a range of themes and ideas for studies of the Swan River and is based on sound best practice techniques for managing the river system.

*WasteNotWantNot* (Southern Sydney Waste Board): The largest and most comprehensive domestic composting

program ever launched in Australia, designed to divert organic waste from the wastestream and deal with it at a localised level.

## 2001 Finalists

*The Sustainable Living Program* (Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales): a high school education and innovation program that engages Australian high school students in identifying environmental problems and designing innovative solutions. The program offers a range of free support, resources and rewards to teachers and students. Since its conception in 1998, the program has grown to a national operation servicing over 500 schools across Australia. The program provides over \$25,000 worth of prizes to reward students, teachers and schools working on environmental design projects.

*Waste Wise Schools* (Gould League): The Waste Wise Schools program educates young Australians to be more aware of environmentally friendly waste disposal practises. The program offers support for schools to develop and run their own waste and litter programs integrating curriculum and school operating practices through a number of support media including videos, CD-roms, teacher training, and a network of exemplary lighthouse schools. Since its inception in 1998, participating schools have reduced waste going to landfill by up to 95%, with annual cost savings as high as \$4,500.

*Wildscape* (Gould League): see article following.

*Streamwatch* is a dynamic environmental action network, educating and empowering communities concerned about local water catchments. Streamwatch celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2000, with the design and implementation of several new initiatives including a new White Kit enabling primary school students to perform many of the tests conducted by high school and community groups. The program now engages over 800 groups in NSW and involves over 30,000 participants. 