

## **Environmental Educator of the Year 2021**

**Bonnie Beal-Richardson**

**Information supplied by Dr Catherine Baudains for AAEE WA Chapter**

### **1. Outline how the candidate has made a significant contribution to EfS**

Bonnie worked in the EfS and community engagement field in 2009 before pursuing a Bachelor in Sustainability (2012- 2015). She received Western Australian young achiever awards in 2017 and 2018. She pursued further training in both Sustainability and Organisational Coaching, because she believes that any journey of change also invites us to do the internal work at both the individual and collective levels. Through her voluntary and professional work she demonstrates a broad set of skills that are transferable to social, environmental and economic contexts including the design of multiple community EfS programs, partnership development, delivery of community events, community engagement and consultation, and strategic thinking. As an Environmental Education Officer at the City of Mandurah she has built a team around the commitment to empower everyday people to rediscover their innate strengths, skills and passions, and leveraging these to develop and deliver community projects and events. She has: empowered youth action; channelled community actions integrating effective responses to local and global sustainability and environmental challenges; designed, delivered and evaluated a large number of community projects and programs; coordinated the delivery of the annual Perth and Peel Regional Kids Teaching Kids Conference; designed and trialled the Community Household Electricity Reduction Pilot (CHERP) Project and CHERP Schools program; developed and implement actions to enhance the sustainability of corporate activities; established research partnerships for EfS projects; inspired and managed volunteers for innumerable environmental and conservation activities (tree planting, restoration, citizen science), and; engaged local residents in caring for and activating local spaces for the betterment of the environment and the broader community. In WA she has been central to bidding for and organising the 2021 AAEE National Biennial Conference and virtual 2020 conference, negotiating a significant funding agreement with the City of Mandurah and taking on the role of Co-chair.

### **2. Exhibited leadership or mentorship that has influenced others.**

Bonnie provides support to her peers from other local governments and non-government organisations, setting up effective partnerships that translate to real-world outcomes and facilitating effective community engagement. In 2018, she initiated the bid for the 2020 AAEE Biennial Conference to Mandurah. Her aim as the Co-Chair of this conference is to provide a forum that changes the way practitioner's approach EfS by ensuring they design truly effective, outcomes-focussed programs that build resilience and foster innovation. With her strong commitment to the AAEE network, Bonnie believes this conference has the potential to influence practitioners in the field of EfS both nationally and internationally. Bonnie is heavily focused on creating and enhancing community capacity through the incubation of community-led action and initiatives, and supporting local community groups and volunteers to design and deliver effective community programs. Her leadership in this area has directly encouraged active public participation and engagement, leading to significant change in her local environment and community. A few examples of community projects she has mentored include: § Osprey WA – a group focussed on using citizen science to

effectively monitor local osprey populations § Lakelands Community Gardens – supporting the community to develop a community garden in Lakelands § Coastal Waste Warriors – an initiative focussed on cleaning up local waterways. This group has removed over 1200kgs of rubbish in 12 months, regularly attracting over 100 people to events. § Seabin Project – installation of seabins in Australia, delivered in partnership with Peel Preservation Group § Backyard Bandicoots – engaging community in urban bushland conservation and advocating for practical implementation of research findings for best-practice management of the City’s urban bushland Her tendency to look at the bigger picture to help understand complex, systemic interactions ensures collaboration is her natural way of operating, a characteristic that makes her an effective leader and valued mentor.

### **3. Led by example and walked the sustainability talk in private life.**

Bonnie is an advocate for sustainability throughout all of her life - committed to igniting growth and potential for everyone to change their lives, and the world, for the better. In work and life, her vision is to change the way we think, act, and operate so we can be smart enough to preserve what is good, innovative enough to reform what is in need and brave enough to challenge what is corrupt. Bonnie models sustainability in all she does, from choosing waste free options, committing to local food and responsible consumer behaviour, supporting sustainable business, supporting and encouraging young people and women to challenge inequality, and vocalising climate action amongst many, many other things. She is an innovative, creative, hard-working, big picture thinker who likes to address social and environmental issues as the complex systems they are – she is not interested in band-aid solutions. Her personal commitment to empower everyday people to rediscover their innate strengths, skills and passions, and leveraging these to achieve positive sustainability outcomes is awe inspiring. Her personal efforts have led to local people and communities realising their potential through the vehicle of caring for our environment.

### **4. Outline the connections of the applicants work to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, please select one Major goal and one Minor goal.**

As a committed, system thinking sustainability practitioner Bonnie is active in every one of the 17 SDG’s, but SDG X & 17 have been selected as examples for this nomination.

Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals SDG 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development), recognises multi-stakeholder partnerships as critical for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals. Through her work Bonnie has continually brokered multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development that contribute to the implementation of inter-governmentally agreed development goals and commitments.

She has:

- Successfully championed Local government supported ARC Linkage Grant research projects.
- Established partnerships between local government and not-for-profit organisations to enable major events or projects such as the AAEE Biennial Conference 2021, Kids Teaching Kids Conferences, Youth Climate Change Tours, and including an annual Environment Event as part of the Stretch Arts Festival in Mandurah.

- Fostered partnerships to developed a Renewable Energy Options Paper to Western Power outlining a community battery storage program to reduce peak demand on the South West Interconnected System (SWIS) electricity grid.
- Utilised multi-stakeholder partnerships to design and trial the Community Household Electricity Reduction Pilot (CHERP) Project and CHERP Schools program
- Established multi-stakeholder partnerships to Develop and implement actions to enhance the sustainability of corporate activities and other sustainability focussed outcomes.
- Continually worked with or lead a number of environmental networks including coordinating the Mandurah Environmental Volunteer Alliance, environmental and youth advisory groups, project steering committees and state species conservation networks.

Goal 15: Life on Land SDG 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss) recognises the critical importance of conservation efforts. Through her work Bonnie is committed to conserving areas of remnant bushland within the City of Mandurah under threat from urbanisation for the joint benefit of the environment and Mandurah community, encouraging the community to actively participate in the rehabilitation and restoration of bushland areas.

She has:

- initiated restoration of degraded ecosystems,
- involved community in ongoing monitoring and maintenance of conservation reserves,
- assessed and built support for the National Heritage Listing of Yalgorup Park,
- established research projects to identify impact of urbanisation on local marsupial species,
- engaged the community in numerous ongoing urban conservation projects aimed at halting biodiversity loss from the Mandurah area such as BackYard Bandicoots, and Mandurah Fairy Tern sanctuary.