

AAEE Strategic Planning 2024

LIVING DOCUMENT



Roots: the interwoven foundations of AAEE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who are the original human inhabitants of this continent, have practiced environmental education over tens of thousands of years. Invasion and colonisation have impacted Indigenous peoples, cultures and lifeways in devastating ways. We acknowledge, honour, and respect the deep, comprehensive and abiding Indigenous knowledge and care of Country, as well as the continuing efforts of First Nations educators, elders, and communities to reclaim and share their knowledge on how to regenerate balance and eco-social justice to Country across Australia.



Trunk: the founding body of AAEE

In colonised Australia, the field of Environmental Education has developed alongside other forms of environmental activism and advocacy. Although nature conservation education existed from the 1940s, the development of formal environmental education followed the growth of the Australian environmental movement, which began with the campaign to save Lake Pedder in the 1970s. In 1980, the Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE) was founded and began its work advocating for education about, in, and for the environment. In 1984, AAEE initiated the Australian Journal of Environmental Education (AJEE) to generate, share, and curate research relevant to the field.

While there were some State/Territory policies that included environmental education in the 1980s and beyond, the first major national acknowledgement was the *Environmental Education National Action Plan*, introduced in 2000. This plan defined environmental education broadly as “raising awareness, acquiring new perspectives, values, knowledge and skills, and formal and informal processes leading to changed behaviour in support of an ecologically sustainable environment” (p. 3).

A second national statement, *Living Sustainably: The Australian Government's National Action Plan for Education and Sustainability*, was published nine years later (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2009). Following global trends in the field, this document exemplified a clear move from “environmental education” to “Education for Sustainability”. In 2010, the Australian Department of Environment, Water, Heritage, and the Arts launched a follow up document *Sustainability Curriculum Framework: A guide for curriculum developers and policy makers*. These documents have remained the current national policy on environmental/sustainability education for over a decade.

In 2014, the national Australian Curriculum was implemented. Environmental education per se was not included as a discipline or a sub-discipline. However, the topic of *sustainability* appears as one of three Cross-Curriculum Priorities (CCPs). The curriculum is aspirational in its declaration that all the disciplines have the potential of including sustainability as a Cross-Curriculum Priority in their teaching and learning. Opportunities to further infuse environmental education exist with every revision of the Australian Curriculum.



Branches: the growth and development of AAEE

In the meantime, AAEE branched out beyond its initial founding as an organisation supporting school educators, to a cross-sectoral body supporting both professional and volunteer environmental educators. As an organisation, AAEE understood early on that environmental education is not and should not be limited to schools and other educational institutions (i.e. early childhood centres and universities). It therefore widened its arms to embrace those working in environmental/sustainability education in government, not-for-profit organisations, and industry. AAEE now has a proud culture of including educators, activists and supporters from all sectors, both formal and informal, paid and volunteer.

As a peak body, AAEE also understands that it is not only cross-sectoral, but also cross-pedagogical environmental education that will move us into a stronger future. As an

organisation, we support environmental education in the following pedagogical and content areas (this list is in alphabetical order and is not definitive):

- Arts-Based Environmental Education
- Climate Change Education
- Climate Resilience Education
- Deep Ecology/Active Hope education
- Education for Sustainability and Regenerative cultures
- Environmental Sciences Education
- Garden-Based Education/Regenerative Agriculture
- Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing
- Nature Connection Education
- Nature Journaling
- Outdoor Education
- Renewable Energy Education
- Waste Education



Leaves, Blossoms and Fruit: the products of decades of work

OUR MISSION: The purpose of AAEE is to celebrate and amplify environmental education in all its many forms and practices, and to support environmental educators across sectors by building networks, resources, and skills.

OUR OBJECTIVES:

To maintain a strong organisation based on integrity and inclusivity, by:

- Strengthening understanding and ties with First Nations educators and knowledge holders.
- Supporting connection to Country
- Welcoming people from different cultures, identities, backgrounds and abilities.
- Actively supporting all forms, practices, and pedagogies of environmental education.

- Developing a strong culture of learning, leadership, and professional development.
- Building a culturally and financially resilient national organisation.

To create opportunities for collaboration and connection, by:

- Facilitating events and projects that strengthen ties amongst members, and between member groups and the National organisation.
- Building and maintaining partnerships with other organisations and entities – locally, nationally, internationally.
- Prioritising a culture of connection and care between humans and the natural world.

To advocate for eco-social justice through environmental education, by:

- Creating and maintaining strong advocacy practices at a National government level.
- Acting and speaking for humans and other-than-humans who don't have a voice.
- Supporting a wider definition of advocacy that includes education and agency-building in the following arenas:
 - holding actions (highlighting and halting current harmful practices).
 - transforming societal systems (food supply, energy transformations, education practices, politics, etc).
 - mind-set shifting (beginning with, learning with and incorporating Indigenous people, insights, knowledges and practices; questioning business-as-usual approaches; honouring and including non-Euro migrant knowledges and experiences)

A final note (for now!) ... this document was developed through two National Strategic Planning workshops (February 2024 and July 2024) as well as through consultation with State/Territory Chapter leaders and members. It is a “Living Document” in that its intention is to support the ongoing work of the organisation in its widest sense, without being prescriptive or limiting. We invite all who read this document to get involved, experiment with and apply its principles, and then feedback into the ongoing ecosystem of organisational learning and adaptation. Email president@aaee.org.au with ideas, questions or comments.