

# Enviroschools

## OTAGO

February 2017



## Nau mai haere mai

Welcome to the first Enviroschools newsletter for 2017. A lot has been happening in Otago Enviroschools including a number of staff changes. Jenny Nielsen, who has had a long involvement with Enviroschools, retired at the end of 2016. Her experience and positive energy will be greatly missed. Jenny Upton has left to sail the high seas and is heading for the Pacific Islands mid-2017. Gina Plumpton joined the DCC as a facilitator in the fourth term of 2016 and Steve Clarke has taken over from Laura Gourley in the Clutha District while Laura is on maternity leave. Both Gina and Steve bring lots of energy and enthusiasm to their new roles. I started as the Regional Coordinator last September. This position is now funded by the Otago Regional Council. I'm looking forward to meeting many of you during 2017.

This newsletter showcases some of the many things that are happening in Enviroschools across the region. We hope that you find these stories as inspiring as we do.

Ngā mihi nui

### Robyn Zink

Enviroschools Regional Co-ordinator

## St Gerard's School waste audit

In 2015 St Gerard's took a term-long focus on waste. The senior class looked at waste in the school. They found out where the food in a typical lunch box came from, calculated food miles, the energy needed to make and package this food and what they could do to mitigate the waste. They also conducted a school-wide waste audit. One year on from their initial waste audit, the students undertook a second audit. As with the first audit, the students collected three days of waste generated at the school. The most noticeable difference in this second audit was that the compostables, recyclables and waste came in separate containers.

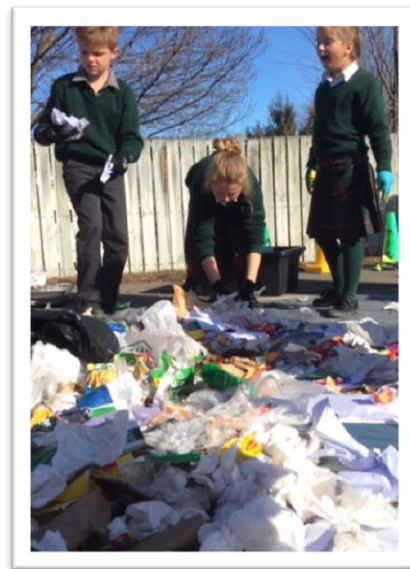
The whole school took part in the audit. Students described this as "really mucky, a bit smelly, and a little gross". This close encounter with waste really engaged students and teachers.

The findings were:

1. St Gerard's has reduced the amount of waste it generates by almost half in the last year.

2. Plastic was the most common waste product, mostly from individually wrapped snacks.
3. The worms and compost are really well fed at St Gerard's. Food scraps come back (after being composted) as fresh food from the school garden.

St. Gerard's have made great strides in reducing waste. There is room for more improvement, and the students have lots of ideas for this. Keep up the good work St. Gerard's.



*Getting close and personal with waste*

## Queenstown Montessori early childhood education centre

Queenstown Montessori has recently reviewed their sustainability practices as they are planning a holistic reflection (Green-Gold) this year. Sustainability can be as simple as reducing, reusing and recycling. The children take what they learn in the centre and apply it to their wider environment, as well as bringing their passion for the environment from home back to the centre.

Fleur, an active Enviroschool member, brought three empty yoghurt containers into Room 1 at the centre to grow pumpkin seeds in, which she then took home to grow as seedlings. Not only have Fleur and her family re-used and recycled, but her



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mother Cassie, tells us that Fleur wants to do more for the environment. They have joined the Wakatipu Wilding Conifer Control Group. Cassie says both her daughters enjoy going up to Bob's Peak and pulling out the pine seedlings and listening to the birdsong from the pockets of native bush that occur amongst the blocks of pine.

*Fleur pulling out wilding pine seedlings*



how far it is to the next toilet, helping them to plan their next responsible stop.



*Makarora students planning signage*

The early childhood years especially, are an amazing time for learning, and what the children show us is that they connect their families with the environment, sustaining our community in the process.

**Jane McLeod**  
Queenstown Montessori

### Connect

Keep up to date with Enviroschools news and share your questions and ideas

[Facebook.com/groups/EnviroschoolsOtago/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/EnviroschoolsOtago/)

## Planning for the future in Makarora

The students at Makarora School, the smallest Enviroschool in the Queenstown Lakes District, were imagining what the future might look like in preparation for their trip to Christchurch. This prompted the students to reflect on what is important to them about their place and the future for Makarora.

They identified that while tourism is important to Makarora, there are downsides to its growth. The students often come across human waste in laybys and lake access areas. They are going to address this with simple signage letting people know

## Carisbrook Primary School: *exercising people power*

After investigating waste and the actions they could take to make a difference, the students at Carisbrook Primary School decided to create a petition to Parliament to ban the single use plastic shopping bag. They met with Clare Curran, their local MP, for advice on wording and timing. The campaign was launched in the centre of Dunedin in October and the petition gathered more than 1000 signatures in the first few weeks.

Many schools around the country are supporting the campaign and gathering signatures in their communities. If you'd like to join the campaign speak to your Enviroschools Facilitator to get a copy of the petition. The students plan to present the petition to Ms Curran on the steps of Parliament at the end of March, so please work those citizen muscles in support during your first month back at school and be part of changing a New Zealand law.





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*Meeting with Ms Curran, the local MP*

Congratulations to all three schools for going through the reflection process. Holistic reflection provides an opportunity to celebrate success and deepen sustainability knowledge and practices. We encourage schools to undertake a holistic reflection every three years. Get in touch with your facilitator to book a date for your next holistic reflection.

## The power of an Enviroschools vision at Kavanagh College

A small and committed group of students and a teacher formed an Enviro-council at Kavanagh College in 2016. They spent the year creating a vision for a sustainable Kavanagh College. They created a map of the school and posed the question of what the school will look like, what they will be learning, what they will be doing, and who will be involved in their sustainable school.

The exercise was done with teachers first, then with small groups of students. There were some great ideas generated including a waste free canteen, school composting and recycling systems, edible gardens and fruit trees, solar panels, and learning about clean energy.

The Enviro-council presented their vision to the Board of Trustees who were really excited by what they heard. The process will continue in 2017 with the creation of a document the school can use to guide their sustainability journey.

This was a great way to involve students and staff from a big school in Enviroschools. It was also inspiring to see that many people understood what was needed for a sustainable future and how enthusiastic school management is about the vision.

## Holistic reflection at Cromwell Primary

Cromwell Primary (Silver) was one of three Otago schools that undertook a holistic reflection in 2016. The other two were Millers Flat School (Bronze) and Carisbrook Primary School (Bronze).

Cromwell Primary School has a strong enviro-group, a passionate key teacher, a supportive principal and staff. Sustainability practices can be seen throughout the school. Students are empowered to make decisions and take action. An example of this was a school-wide vision mapping process where students identified a neglected corner by the library room they wanted to beautify. They worked with experts and community members to choose low maintenance plants suitable for the area and have now planted it up.



Respect of diversity and Māori perspectives are also evident in the school's daily practices. The students participate in Polyfest annually and designed the story panels which frame the waharoa (the entrance) to the school's outdoor stage. These panels depict local stories of Kopuwai, a giant who lived on the Old Man Range.

**Holistic Reflection**  
Is it more than three years since your school undertook a holistic reflection? Get in touch with your facilitator to book a date for your next holistic reflection.

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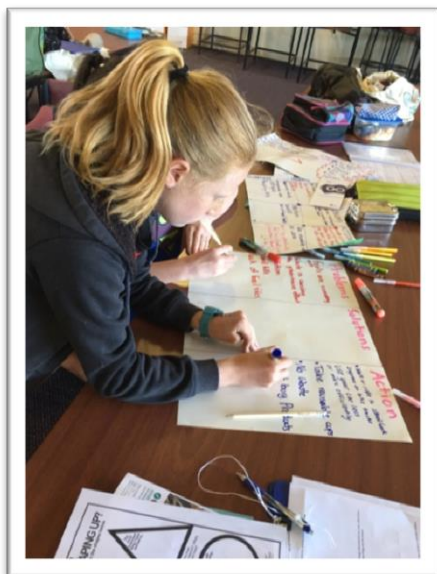
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## Our Future Climate Primary School hui

Thirty-six students from Dunedin Enviroschools gathered on December 2 to explore the predicted effects of climate change and the steps they can take to minimise these. Each group worked with an expert to explore a topic. These included beach erosion, groundwater and sea level rise, marine mammals, sustainable business practices, civil defence, and methane production. Experts from the Dunedin City Council, Department of Conservation, University of Otago and the Otago Regional Council helped out on the day. Thanks to the ORC, the students used public transport to get to the various sites around the city to find out about their topic. Taking a bus was a highlight of the day for many of the students.

*Students working on their poster*



The students spent the afternoon making posters of what they learnt and shared this with other groups. There were some common themes including taking public transport, walking or biking, using resources carefully and working with the environment - not against it. Students were encouraged to share what they had learnt with the rest of their school.

### Enviroschools staff

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## Spreading the load when a key teacher leaves

When a key teacher leaves a school or centre, it often takes a while for the remaining teachers to pick up all of the threads of Enviroschools. Thankfully this hasn't been the case at Montessori Children's House Wanaka (MCHW). Nicola McGregor, who has led Enviroschools since 2010, has left the centre to become the head teacher at Arrowtown Montessori.

Nic has involved all of the teachers in MCHW's sustainability approach. The centre holds an Enviroschools-specific meeting at least once a term to which all of the teachers, administrators and board members are invited. Many of the teachers regularly attend the early childhood cluster held in Central Otago once a term, as well as the Enviroschools cluster meeting for Wanaka Enviroschools.

This means all of the staff are familiar with the way Enviroschools works and are able to incorporate sustainability into their daily activities. Involving as many teachers, staff and board members as possible in your sustainability approach does make your centre or school more resilient.

We wish Nic lots of luck in her new role and thank her for the hard work she has put in over the years.

## Empowerment Fund

Applications for the Empowerment Fund will be opening soon. These grants fund projects that inspire sustainable communities.

