

2019 SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM

Igniting souls, inspiring change
A glocal event



CITY OF
GOLDCOAST.

REVIEW

13 MAY 2019



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sustainable Schools Network Limited (SSN), in partnership with Somerset College and the City of Gold Coast, delivered the inaugural 2019 Sustainability Symposium on 13 May 2019. Identified as an ambitious undertaking, the event was coordinated after just seven months of the SSN commencing. Building partnerships and highlighting the need for sustainability education to become a mainstream concept were the main aims for the event.

Almost 600 individuals received the message that the youth of today are inspired and empowered! The participants were from 44 organisations and 39 schools, coordinated by 36 volunteers. With NAPLAN testing on the following day (excluding some schools), the attendance rate was still incredibly positive. The keynote speaker Melati Wijsen and other youth presenters Molly Steer, Kareem El-Ansary (the current Australian United Nations Youth Representative) and local Holley Sommerville Knott, stimulated and motivated students and teachers to return to their schools as change agents.

Sponsorship ensured the event costs were covered, whilst Facebook was the primary marketing tool utilised. The event page reached 4200 people. Pre-event tasks consumed an estimated 1100 hours in volunteer time, and many individuals spent up to 16 hours on the day to ensure schools could come together to learn more about the cross-curriculum priority: sustainability.

Key highlights were:

- the panel discussion during the evening event;
- the Year 6 student delivering the personalised acknowledgement to country in local dialect Yugambah;
- the ice breaking laughter in the Great Hall in the morning;
- students, teachers and local NFP organisations engaging;
- the delicious 90% sustainable meal sourced and provided by Mudjira Village Eatery;
- the removal of boundaries between states, schools, ages; and
- building capacity in schools, youth, teachers, administrators, grounds keepers, and local organisations enthused to work with schools to ensure a sustainable future for our children.



2019 SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM: GOALS

The three main objectives for the 2019 Sustainability Symposium were:

- Establishing a common language regarding sustainability;
- Addressing the 12th sustainable development goal (responsible consumption and production); and,
- Building partnerships for sustainable education within our local region.

Common Language

The 2019 Symposium initiated a deeper understanding of the concept 'sustainability', however a focus remained on the environmental aspect. The evening session was more successful in broadening the scope of this concept, as the panel discussion specifically focused on sustainability models, implications for the education systems and some practical examples were presented. The day session involved mostly local speakers who clearly have a passion for environmental protection. Therefore feedback from attendees focused on their commitment to environmental protection and waste management especially recycling.

Recommendation: This goal be further developed in 2020.

12th SDG

SDGs were discussed repeatedly building the dialogue and familiarity with the goals. The 12th goal provided a focal point for speakers, particularly in the day however most presentations did not connect with this as requested. Nevertheless, all speakers were engaging and identified the results of irresponsible consumption and production.

Recommendation: For the 2020 symposium, the goal be chosen before the speakers.

Building Partnerships

Thirty-nine schools and forty-four organisations participated in the Symposium. As a starting point within the local Gold Coast and Tweed region, this was a considerable uptake in a short period of time. Already post-event reports are positive, including a Teacher and P'n'F rep from one school organising a meeting days after the event. Building partnerships builds capacity and this goal is essential to ensuring sustainability education.

Recommendation: This goal remain the foundation of the Sustainability Symposium concept.

Final Note

A further unintended goal was identified during the course of the event: Youth Empowerment.

Recommendation: 'Youth empowerment' be the fourth 2020 Sustainability Symposium goal.



Pictured left to right: Erin Merrin (SSN Chairperson), Melati Wijzen, Kareem El-Ansary, Holley Sommerville Knott, Rob Hales (Griffith University), Amelia Berner (OzHarvest), Katie Norman (SSN CEO).

2019 SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM: SPEAKER AND PROGRAM REVIEW

The 2019 Sustainability Symposium involved a day session, Koala House program and evening professional development dinner. Initiatives and ideas were showcased by 24 presenters, including 6 schools and 13 youth. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, yet there is room for improvement in 2020.

Day Session

The format for the day session involved a keynote presentation with all attendees, three workshop times with 5 sessions running concurrently (a total of 15 workshops), and a combined 'call to action' conclusion. Melati Wijzen's keynote and workshop was rated the most enjoyable, with other youth speakers also highly rated. Outward Bound performed an icebreaker to commence the day, Melati inspired all present and the call to action left attendees ready to "be a mosquito". Unfortunately workshops often ran over time or out of time to conduct the interactive aspect. Feedback identified the day session as inspirational and empowering youth. One survey response's sustainability vision was, "*I can make a difference! There are other people who feel the same! Talk to them.*"

Recommendation: In 2020, the format remain the same with a greater emphasis on youth speakers, adhering to the event goals and delivering interactive workshops.

Koala House Program

Our Symposium partners Somerset College and the City of Gold Coast provided a workshop for grounds staff in Koala House. This ensured both a greater number of schools engaged in the event (as most did not attend other aspects) and greater inclusivity and alignment with sustainability education principles. OzHarvest provided the curriculum afternoon workshop but as a late addition to the program, did not see numbers as high as other event sessions. However it did contribute to knowledge regarding the cross-curriculum priority: sustainability.

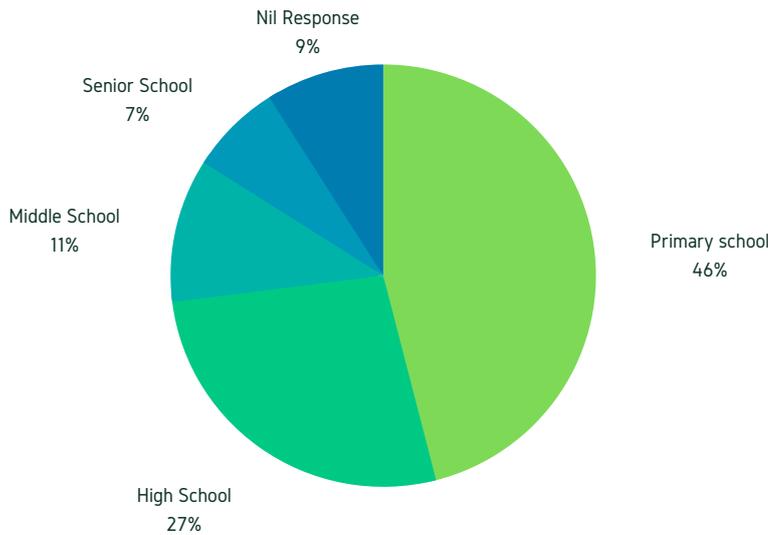
Recommendation: Further develop curriculum learning opportunities, professional development for grounds staff, cleaners and business managers, and to provide a program for parents.

Professional Development Dinner

Originally the dinner was the main opportunity identified to provide professional development for teachers and administrators. Professional development can occur in many forms and the concept here was to provide engaging speakers and a panel discussion to contribute to sustainability knowledge. Although the feedback provided highlighted the preference for attendees to network with peers rather than too many mini presentations, the panel discussion was recognised as the best part of the evening - "*Being able to hear all the different approaches was wonderful*". 96% of survey response's reported the food was great/excellent, with one guest stating it, "*Was quite possibly the nicest meal I have ever eaten - divine is an understatement!*" There were a number of comments regarding the privilege of private schools which is an aspect of the event that requires careful consideration and improved communication in 2020.

Recommendation: Utilise the same caterer in 2020, reduce the number of speakers & focus on the panel discussion.



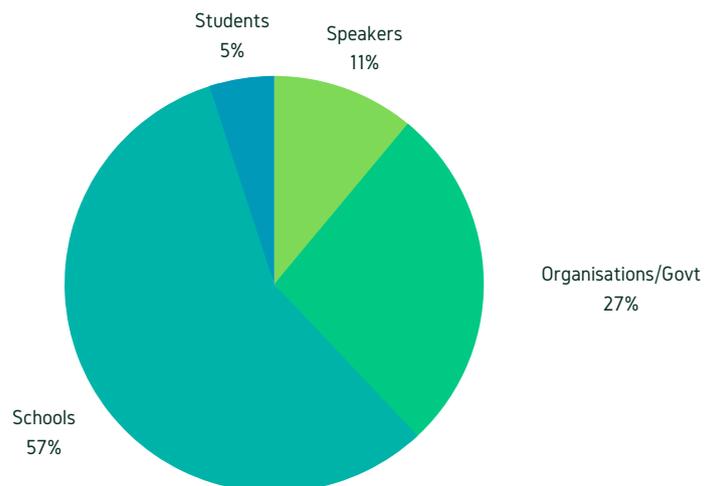


DAY SESSION

Approximately 1/3 of the day session participants completed the event feedback form, indicating a majority primary school audience. Of the 39 schools in attendance throughout the event, 17 were primary schools and there were 11 Preparatory-Year 12 schools. Therefore it is likely that the survey results are reflection of the day session audience.

EVENING SESSION

Of the 155 attendees at the evening session only 30 completed the online survey post event. However, from the seating plan it was identified that the majority of attendees were from schools, either being teachers or administrators. The other most represented group were organisations interested in school sustainability processes.



SCHOOLS & ORGANISATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

The inclusion of the City of Gold Coast Water Efficiency and Irrigation workshop ensured a wider audience was accessed. It also meant another community within schools were included in the program. It is important to recognise that schools include students, teachers, administrators, parents, cleaning and ground staff amongst other people. It is

recommended that the 2020 program work to include parents, business managers, and build on the curriculum workshop that was included for teachers in the 2019 program. It was also abundantly clear from this experience that many organisations both not-for-profit and for profit are interested in working with school communities.

2019 SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM: LOGISTICS AND VENUE REVIEW

Somerset College were the ideal school to host the inaugural 2019 Sustainability Symposium. With years of internal event management experience, having an external organisation deliver an event on their grounds was a new experience. The team available to ensure a successful event resulted in the many obstacles encountered in managing the 2019 Sustainability Symposium being overcome in a professional manner. The teams made available to the SSN included:

- Logistics;
- Events;
- AV and ICT;
- Cleaning and grounds staff;
- Catering;
- OH&S;
- Marketing/media;
- Management; and,
- Teachers.

Being able to access an experienced and diverse team to support the Symposium requirements, resulted in the SSN outlaying minimal costs and the delivery of a high quality event. The dinner survey resulted in 69% excellent responses (the highest rating), whilst the day session respondents most commonly identified the venue a 9/10 rating. One student stated that Somerset College is the, "*Closest I'll ever get to Hogwarts!*"

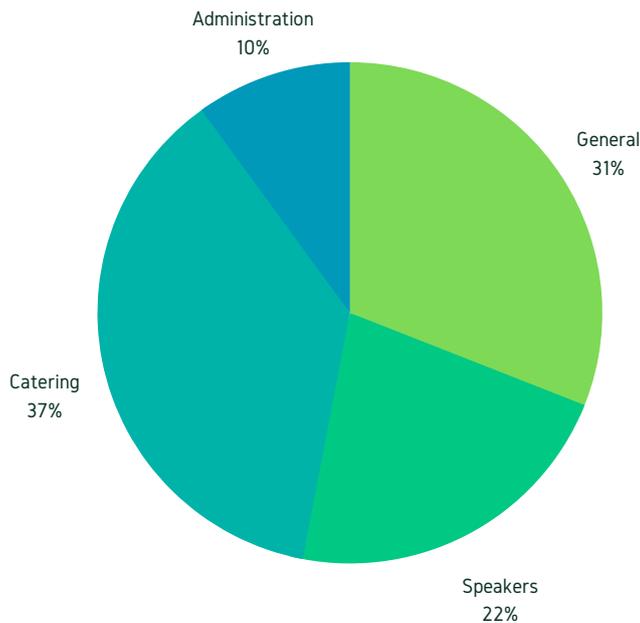
Recommendations for 2020

Somerset College attended a feedback and review consultation with the SSN to provide recommendations for the 2020 event at All Saints Anglican School. Key points noted were:

- Choosing a date that does not coincide with exams, especially NAPLAN;
- An improved registration and ticketing process;
- Greater clarity regarding the responsibility of the hosting school to market the event;
- Improved signage and information provided to staff in high traffic areas (e.g. main administration building);
- Increased networking time in the evening and a reduced number of speakers.

The SSN are incredibly grateful to have initiated our signature event at a venue where so much support was provided. Thank you Somerset College.





COSTS

The event costs included catering, speaker engagement, administration and miscellaneous items. The original budget was approximately \$20000, and this was only marginally exceeded. The catering for the dinner was offered at a very affordable price for the learning opportunity provided and to deliver the service in 2020. Further the entire event occurred without a marketing budget and with over 1100 hours of volunteer time. This is not 'sustainable' in the long term.

FUNDING

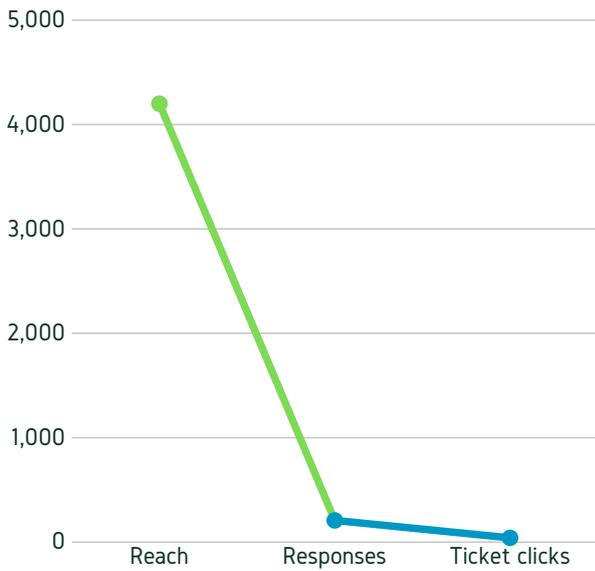
Sponsorship was the primary funding source, with only 12% of funding being accessed from ticket sales. There was also considerable in-kind support offered by the local community including: the venue and staffing being provided free of charge; volunteer time being used prior to, during and after the event; the evening drinks were donated by Somerset College; and all speaker gifts were generously donated by a number of organisations.



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The financial success of the event was largely due to the generous sponsorship of the City of Gold Coast in particular, the support of the hosting school (Somerset College) and the hours of unpaid work utilised to deliver the event. Ticket sales were low which may be explained by this being the first event, the limited

reputation of the SSN, and schools having a short timeframe upon which to budget for this event. In 2020 there may be an increased number of ticket sales. However, it is anticipated that the primary funding source would again be sponsorship.

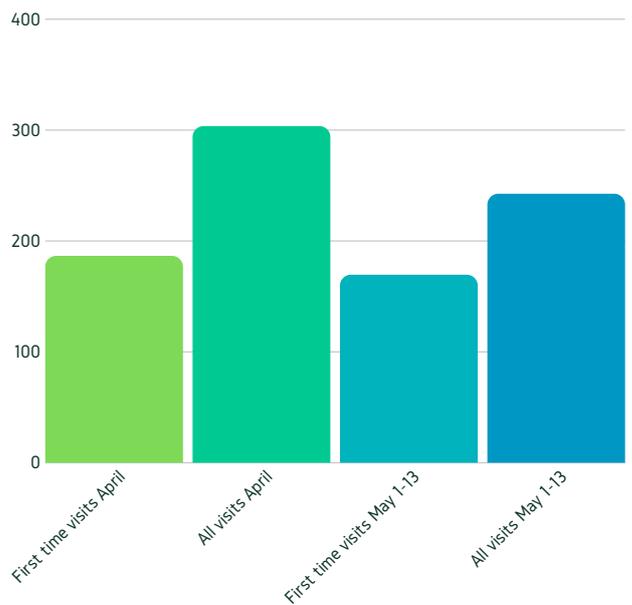


SOCIAL MEDIA

An analysis of the Facebook marketing for the Symposium identified a 53.7% Gold Coast and 73% female audience. The event page reached 4200 people, with the 35-44 years age group the most engaged. 208 people responded to the event page and 41 ticket links occurred. The 2nd and 13th of May were the highest days of engagement on the SSN FB page. The 2nd of May involved 4 posts, one of which was the SSN Journal. The 13th of May was of course the event. Therefore, FB will remain useful for marketing tool in 2020. However, other avenues need to be explored to engage a younger audience.

WEBSITE

The SSN website was only built in March of 2019, therefore there is limited data analytics regarding the marketing potential of the SSN website. However, since the 1st of April there have been 303 visits to the site and from May 1-13 a further 242. As the SSN grows the website will become a more useful marketing tool.



REVIEW OF MARKETING

Somerset College also provided marketing support through their Public Relations service. This ensured media (Channel 7 & 9) attended the event. The resulting news presentation focused on environmental sustainability and waste management. Other marketing avenues utilised included: an article in Blank GC; inclusion in the City of Gold Coast events calendar; and information the CBD Robina's

Insider Magazine. The SSN Journal also promoted the Symposium, as did the networking night and three prior SSN speaking engagements at other Gold Coast events. Our Instagram page was not overly active and is an area requiring improvement, whereas LinkedIn was another marketing tool utilised by professional people seeking further information regarding the Symposium and SSN facilitators.

2019 SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM: STALL REVIEW

The 2019 Sustainability Symposium offered free 'stall' space for speakers and sponsors. In total, 15 organisations accepted this opportunity which ensured 13 stalls during the day session and 7 in the evening were visible. More than 50% of stall holders were not-for-profit organisations. Some examples of stall activities included:

- Simulation adventure experiences (Outward Bound);
- Promotional information flyers;
- Water bug tank (City of Gold Coast);
- Sale of goods considered sustainable (Tell Someone Who Cares & Green Heroes);
- Pic Perfect photobooth.

The City of Gold Coast offered their free Choose Tap refill stations for attendees. Participants were reminded pre-event to bring their own bottles. The water utilised through this service equated to 166 single-use water bottles not being purchased throughout the event.

Student feedback was positive throughout the day and stalls were visibly well attended. Some delegates reported there was not enough time to engage with stalls and eat lunch. It was also identified that students and teachers valued the opportunity to interact with speakers post workshops. The evening session due to lighting, program timing and stall placement resulted in a limited opportunity to engage with stall holders.

Recommendations for 2020

Stall/Trade Show design needs to match functionality and adequate time needs to be allocated to this aspect of the event. Students enjoy interactivity and an opportunity to discuss with workshop presenters. Business managers, teachers, parents, grounds staff and administrators may benefit from learning about available resources for sustainable building design, curriculum programs and local service providers. During the dinner it is recommended that only major sponsors have a stall presence as an exclusive opportunity for our biggest supporters. Finally, it is recommended that the SSN communicate opportunities earlier and more specifically to ensure logistically for our team stalls can be better managed and for the stall holder greater promotional opportunities exist.



RECOMMENDATIONS

All Saints Anglican School in Merrimac on the Gold Coast is the host school for the 2020 Sustainability Symposium. The SSN are excited to build on the 2019 event with the intention to engage more schools and organisations in ensuring sustainability is a mainstream concept in education by developing 4 key goals and deepening sustainability knowledge and skills. Recommendations are:

- SDG focus chosen before speakers;
- Maintain or increase the number of youth presenters;
- Broaden the program to include business managers, parents and learning opportunities in addition to networking for teachers and curriculum developers;
- Funding model to include remuneration for key SSN staff;
- Improved communication with the hosting school staff and volunteers prior to the event;
- Improved signage for attendees;
- Marketing strategy to ensure the Symposium goals are communicated more clearly and to engage youth-centred mechanisms;
- Opportunities to meet with speakers are incorporated in the program;
- Develop the concept of a 'Trade Show';
- Improved communication for stall holders and presenters regarding event expectations;
- A date that does not clash with NAPLAN or other exams.

We are looking forward to building on the 2019 experience as we turn our focus to the 2020 Sustainability Symposium.

For more information email: info@ssn.org.au
or visit our website: www.ssn.org.au

