

# INAUGURAL ECO ERC SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

In June 2019, Edmund Rice College hosted a Sustainability Conference for students from local schools including St Johns Nowra, Dapto High School, St Joseph's Catholic High School Albion Park, Kiama High School, Holy Spirit College Bellambi, St Marys College and Edmund Rice College.

College staff member Mrs Diane Schodde, who coordinated the event, saw the conferences as a great opportunity to establish a sustainability network for Illawarra schools. A central goal of the conference was to improve their school environments by exchanging ideas and learning how to implement these from each other. This has been a student led initiative from our small ECO ERC group with the guidance of Dr Belinda Gibbons (UOW Business School) and Diane Schodde.



Guest speakers included Meg Cummins, Professor George Takacs from the University of Wollongong and Edmund Rice student Michael Piela.

Workshops discussed environmentally sustainable practices and delegates shared practices from their schools.

The ERC sustainability conference organised by Mrs Schodde and the ECO ERC group was an invaluable opportunity and first ever initiative of its kind in the Illawarra and surrounds, the focus of this conference was to learn and adopt innovative and creative ways of managing and reducing waste within our schools and everyday life while also empowering and encouraging the network of youth in Illawarra schools to take action and make real tangible change within our communities. The conference was an ideal platform for this. "We are not leaders; we are the changers" – Meg Cummins (guest speaker) "The first thing I have learned is that you are never too small to make a difference" - Greta Thunberg

**Samuil Angelkoski (ERC Year 11 Leader)**

75.8% of delegates felt we achieved the original vision of getting young people from Illawarra schools to discuss and network with other schools about sustainable practices in their schools even though more time could have been spent on discussion in this area. Follow up meetings are now being organised. 84.8% of delegates said they would attend a similar conference again and I am happy to announce that next year ECO ERC will again host the Sustainability Conference on 22nd June 2020.

For more information contact:

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