

Legendary legacies

By **Midland Express** - 13/06/2024



Chewton Primary School principal Bernadette McKenna, sustainability teacher Serena Everill and students proudly displaying their School of the Year trophy. Photo: Luke Lennox, Forest Creek Studios

Two local schools, Chewton Primary School and Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten, have been announced as winners in the 2024 ResourceSmart Schools Awards held in Melbourne last Tuesday.

Chewton Primary School, which has just 87 students, was recognised with the ResourceSmart School of the Year award for its work to incorporate First Nations' perspectives into the school's sustainability focused curriculum, and for its collaboration with local groups on regeneration and waterway pollution programs.

A winner of the Curriculum Leadership School of the Year (Primary) at last year's ResourceSmart Schools Awards, Chewton Primary School is demonstrating that while small, it can achieve big things.

School principal Bernadette McKenna said the school's award-nominated Reconciliation Action Plan showed its strong bond with the community.

“Koorie engagement support officer Aunty Kerri and Kath Coff from Nalderun Education Aboriginal Corporation work with staff to ensure First Nations’ perspectives and pedagogy are part of the school program,” she said.

“In 2023, the school introduced a weekly sustainability class. Students participate in Connecting to Country workshops, where they learn about biodiversity and collaborate with Post Office Hill Action groups on revegetation projects, as well as learning about biodiversity with Connecting Country.”

Also a previous winner of the ResourceSmart Awards, the Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten has won the title of Student Action Team of the Year (Primary), recognising the school’s Eco Club.

The club, which now has 20 members, is carrying out important citizen science and other sustainability initiatives that extend beyond the school community.

One of the Eco Club’s greatest achievements is the Bird Hide project, where students dismantled an unused shelter and moved it to an area overlooking the wetlands to encourage birdwatching during recess and lunch.

Matt Genever, Sustainability Victoria’s CEO, said the winners were outstanding role models.

“This year, Sustainability Victoria marked 15 years of the ResourceSmart Schools Awards with the theme, ‘Legendary Legacies – what will you leave behind?’,” he said.

“These two schools are leaving a wonderful legacy for future generations and I congratulate them on their success.”



Castlemaine Steiner School L- R: Teacher Terry Willis, Freida, Luca, Casper, teacher Katherine Freeman, Sonny, Tavish with Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Action, Sheena Watt.
