FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: 9 MAY 2016

Top educators honoured for leading the way in all things environmental

Four outstanding educators have been recognised for their exemplary contribution in the Environmental Educator of the Year Awards from Environment Education Victoria (EEV).

EEV is the professional association for environmental and sustainability educators in Victoria.

Jane Burns and Julie Wynne were named joint Victorian Environmental Educators of the Year at the awards ceremony on Friday 6 May.

Ms Burns, CERES Education Outreach Area Manager, and Ms Wynne, a teacher at St Louis de Montfort Primary School in Aspendale, were awarded the joint accolade when the judges decided their outstanding achievements across their respective fields meant they could not be separated.

Jeanette McMahon, a teacher and Sustainability Coordinator at Winters Flat Primary School in Castlemaine, and Tom Reddington, the National Schools Program Manager at the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, were both honoured with excellence awards.

The educators were all acknowledged for their impressive work in sharing the environmental message in varied and unique ways.

Ms Burns’ many achievements included successfully campaigning for the reinstatement of funding for ResourceSmart Schools. She also coordinated the CERES ResourceSmart program that delivers to over 280 schools and early learning centres in southern, eastern and northern metropolitan Melbourne.

Ms Burns was also successful in leading a bid for CERES to be the sustainability partner for the state government’s New Schools PPP Project. This partnership raised the environmental education profile in each new school design, helping to build sustainability into the school culture from the ground up.
'The variety of projects Jane has been involved in demonstrates her ability to drill down into the wider issues facing the sector,' said the EEV judging panel.

'She is clearly a very talented and committed environmental educator who undertakes her leadership role at CERES with dedication.'

This same drive, knowledge and passion was also evident in Ms Wynne’s approach. As the Health, Wellbeing and Sustainability Teacher, Ms Wynne is known for taking her commitment to the environment well beyond the school grounds.

‘Julie’s can-do approach has made significant impacts in her school, community and the broader Victorian educational community,’ said the EEV judging panel. ‘Her work is outstanding.’

Her initiatives included coordinating a ‘Kitchen to Gardens’ program teaching students and the community about everything from water treatment ponds and permaculture to solar pumps and cooking.

Ms Wynne has also started a ‘Friends of Aspendale Station’ group, a ‘School Litter Patrol’, and coordinated ‘Steps to Sustainability’ – a conference attended by 150 sustainability teachers from across Victoria.

Excellence-award winner Ms McMahon was also recognised for her wide-reaching approach.

‘Jeanette has put in considerable effort in changing perspectives on how a school and the broader community educate for sustainability,’ said the EEV judging panel.

Key achievements included a student leadership program to drive sustainability across the school, a Bush Tucker Garden connecting to Koorie culture, and a nude food policy resulting in over a quarter less rubbish than in 2012.

The fourth award winner, Mr Reddington, coordinated a unique program, ‘Switched on Schools’, to ignite high school students’ interest in climate change and sustainability.

Mr Reddington was honoured for the program’s role in developing leadership and connecting students with a network to make sustainable change in schools and communities.

Mr Reddington also coordinated climate justice summits where over 300 students from more than 28 high schools across Victoria took part.

‘Tom has empowered students from around the country to connect with climate change and other sustainability issues, and to form great partnerships with other organisations across the globe,’ the EEV judging panel said.

The awards were first initiated by the EEV in 1985. They are designed to acknowledge and celebrate individuals making outstanding contributions to environmental and sustainability education.
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