

School gets a gong for teaching sustainability from the ground up

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Drink up: St Louis de Montfort School receives the Sustainability Award from James Merlino, pictured here with students Tyler Billing, Ashlinn Reilly and Jake Kovacs. Tyler initially wrote to Mr Merlino about the school's Sustainability Precinct. There are feeding a Persian miniature sheep. Picture: Gary Sissons

ST LOUIS de Montfort Primary School in Aspendale has received a 5 Star ResourceSmart Certification for its award-winning Sustainability Precinct.

The award was presented this week by Education Minister James Merlino and Mordialloc MP Tim Richardson.

The certification represents a big milestone on the school's sustainability journey, and recognises the hard work of teachers, staff and students.

The Sustainability Precinct features an outdoor kitchen, vegetable gardens, compost, worm farms, propagating house, wetlands, permaculture area, aquaponics, orchard and animal enclosures with chooks, ducks, geese, rabbits, guinea pigs and birds.

It was developed in 2013 and has since been recognised as one of the best school-based sustainability projects in Victoria, staff say.

St Louis de Montfort won the Education Category of the 2014 Premier's Sustainability Awards, while the precinct also received two awards in last year's ResourceSmart Schools Awards. These were for water sustainability and for having the primary school teacher of the year: sustainability leader Julie Wynne.

The precinct also took out last year's Kevin Heinze Perpetual Award, which is a top honour in the Victorian Schools Garden Awards.

Mr Merlino described the sustainability precinct as a "wonderful example of a program that engages students with real-world experiences, allowing them to participate first-hand in sustainability".

"This one-of-a-kind facility provides students with an opportunity to gain a powerful understanding of sustainability from the ground up," he said.

Mr Richardson said the certification recognised the great work of the dedicated teachers and staff. "They're giving kids a fantastic, hands-on understanding of sustainability and the environment."

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