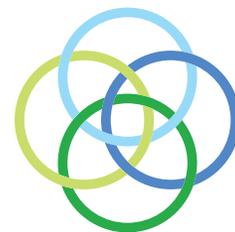




# Cornish College EcoCentre



**CORNISH**  
COLLEGE

# ABOUT CORNISH COLLEGE

- Situated on 100 acres in Bangholme, Cornish College is an independent, coeducational school, established in 2012
- Our vision is “Educating for a sustainable future to ensure young people can make a positive difference in their local and global communities”
- Our core values are *compassion, respect, integrity* and *creativity*
- *Make a Difference* is the College’s motto and our school is guided by the four *Rings of Sustainability* that underpin our curriculum - *personal, socio-cultural, urban/technological* and *natural*
- We have embedded sustainability in all of our teaching and cocurricular activities for each of our students, from Early Learning Centre to Year 12
- Our students are prepared not only for lifelong learning, but also for lifelong wellbeing. They are involved in a wide variety of subject areas and activities from science clubs to running groups and horse riding, performing arts to entrepreneurship and performing arts



# OUTDOOR LEARNING

- Cornish College has a host of learning areas and facilities including an internationally-recognised Early Learning Centre, as well as primary and secondary classrooms and facilities, and a new Senior Studies Centre. Classrooms at Cornish are not bound by traditional walls, and our “100-acre classroom” is used to its maximum potential as a learning space
- The Cornish EcoCentre allows students to learn and create outdoors and to build their own knowledge base around sustainability, animals, food production and the use of recycled materials. Our students’ hunger for knowledge is supported by our dedicated and passionate staff, and our parent and alumni community

Other areas around the campus designed for engaging and hands-on outdoor learning include:

- The Early Learning Centre has a mud pit with logs, large water bowls, tubs of water and dirt. “The open-ended nature of mud encourages creative thinking and allows children to freely create without fear of making mistakes,” said Jeanette Russell, Head of the Early Learning Centre
- Years 3 and 4 have a space for their EcoKids program which covers a garden experience, kitchen experience, garden to table, nature pedagogy, sustainability, chook duty, worm farms and “nude food”
- Students regularly plant trees across the campus
- Senior students have been landscaping and developing a fernery



# ECOCENTRE

- Students from all year levels enjoy the EcoCentre. Many primary classes take weekly walks, getting outside to investigate the flora, insects and animals they discover on their journey. They collect items from nature to utilise in classes such as maths, science and art
- The skills and learnings are shared throughout the school with our high school students taking classes in pallet up-cycling, outdoor and environmental studies, and sustainable land management, and all students learn about food production, animal husbandry, recycling and sustainable practices



- Each element, area and project at Cornish College and also at the EcoCentre has been designed with student learning opportunities in mind. Diverse areas have been incorporated to facilitate outdoor classes in many subject areas. This booklet introduces the features, how they are used and maintained, the sustainable features and how both students and our community are engaged or benefit



# CHICKEN, DUCK AND GUINEA FOWL ENCLOSURES

- We have added many different varieties of chickens to increase diversity and also welcomed guinea fowl and geese. Chicken and duck eggs are used by food technology classes and in the canteen
- Where possible, elements have a double use. We're creating a microclimate in the chicken enclosure by blocking out cold south-westerly winds and growing grape vines over the other sides. The pond also helps to create some humidity. By creating this microclimate, we hope to grow tropical plants such as bananas
- Senior students visited the farm of a past Cornish teacher to learn about selective breeding. We love this sense of community and the school has purchased plants, roosters, geese, ducks, and other livestock from him
- The perimeter of the animal enclosures has been landscaped and planted out with a variety of fruit trees and other edible plants. The log structures were added for Early Learning Centre and primary classes to enjoy climbing over when visiting – they look good too
- We're adding hydroponics to an area in the roof line. We're growing creeping plants such as cucumber and pumpkin over the top of steel mesh suspended from the roof. This will also add to the microclimate
- Students have chicken duty, with classes taking it in turns to feed the chickens, and food scraps are collected from around the school



# FIRE PIT AND FORMAL SEATING AREA

- A formal seating area was created as a demonstration space large enough for an entire class. This was specifically created with senior students in mind, to provide another outdoor classroom space, complementing other similar areas that are used regularly by primary classes. A fire pit in the middle of this space can be used for cooking produce from the gardens
- This area is being used by all ages; for activities such as literature classes, meditation with Early Learning Centre students, reading during Simultaneous Book Week, cooking damper and marshmallows
- Recycled elements include:
  - Recycled tyres form the seating area structure
  - Recycled railway sleepers are used as seats



Early Learning Centre children and Sustainable Land Management students toast marshmallows together

# NURSERY AND NATIVE PLANT PROPAGATION GARDEN

- The nursery has become an important tool for revegetation projects around the College. Seeds and cuttings can be collected directly from the indigenous native plants on the property and propagated ready for planting on-site.
- Instead of buying punnets of vegetables for our veggie gardens, we can propagate our own. This year, we would like to start propagating heritage varieties of vegetables.
- Recycling is a major element of all projects around the College, reducing land-fill and decreasing costs, and the following elements are included in the nursery:
  - Recycled pallet rabbit-proof fence
  - Recycled pallet pot and tray storage
  - Pallet propagation benches for the propagation shed to come
  - Recycled tyres form the propagation garden
  - Potting shed was recycled, at no cost



# AQUAPONICS

- Produce from the aquaponics area goes directly into food technology classes. Produce from different areas of the EcoCentre are incorporated into food technology classes so that students can cook with organically grown produce
- The fence around the aquaponics area was built using steel sheet offcuts from a steel laser cutting company



# PALLET FLOWER GARDENS, SEATS AND MASS FLOWER GARDEN

- The seasonally planted mass display garden can have a new theme each season and be propagated through the nursery
- All gardens follow organic gardening practices with no synthetic fertilisers
- Flower garden beds are made from recycled pallets



*Years 9 and 10 students help the Early Learning Centre class bundle up parsley and petunias to be gifted to their mothers at the Mother's Day breakfast*

# VEGETABLE GARDENS

- Vegetable garden beds are managed using organic farming practices. We have improved our soil structures this year by introducing plenty of organic matter and we have also modified our soil's pH levels
- We've had multiple successful crops with a great deal of produce being utilised by the food technology classes. Early Learning Centre children have enjoyed dip made from our own spinach
- Visiting grandparents have been fortunate to take home celery and bok choy from the aquaponics system and herbs and silver beet from the garden



# ORCHARD

- The EcoCentre has innovative solutions integrated throughout - geese have been introduced into the orchard to keep the grass down as well as for pest management applications. An old water tank has been upcycled to be a duck and geese paddling pool
- A rabbit-proof fence was added to protect fruit trees from rabbit damage
- Regular audits assess which fruit trees should stay or go, and which trees should be added. A seating area with vines grown over the top is being considered, to create shade
- Should the geese be a success in the orchard, the same practices will be utilised in the olive grove. Recycled fence panels form part of the geese enclosure



*Students working in the orchard installing the geese paddling pool*



*Students working in the orchard protecting the fruit trees*

# WORM FARMS

- Worm wee and worm castings are used on our organically-grown vegetables. Food scraps from the home economics area are recycled in the worm farms.
  - The structure was built with pallets
  - Two recycled bath tubs have been used as the farms
  - Old doors purchased from the tip are used as lids for the worm farms
  - Shredded paper and old pot holders are used inside the worm farm



# COMPOST BINS

- Spent produce from the vegetable gardens can be composted through our four-bay compost system. Coffee grounds from the staffroom also get composted here



*Students examine the contents of bins to evaluate how items have been or could have been sorted, to reduce the impact on our environment.*

INCURSION - sustainability officer from Dandenong council - Louise

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March

I'm here to talk to you about rubbish & recycling

Who knows where the things from the red bin goes?  
To the tip - Ned

We got some cardboard boxes & we made a house - Finley

What goes into the yellow bin?  
cardboard boxes - Ned

It's a recycling bin

I've got a recycling bin at my house - Finley



Children learn about recycling

# BEES

- Bees were reintroduced to the College after a 10-year absence. The bees were positioned next to the orchard so the fruit trees will be pollinated as well as our veggie gardens
- The students are actively engaged with the day-to-day management of the hives
- Students embarked on a project to make and market Cornish honey. Through this project, they have gained training and responsibility regarding the production phases of our Cornish bees, as well as the collection, budgeting, marketing and selling of our Cornish honey. Honey was sold to much delight



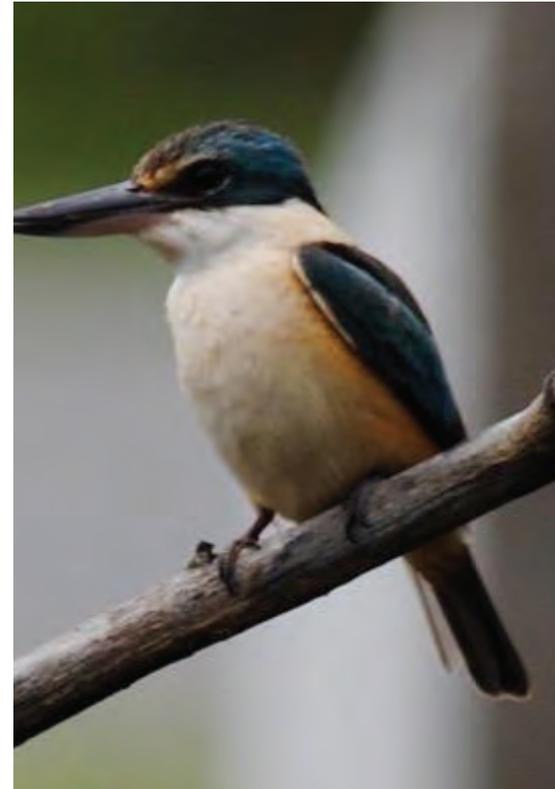
# WETLANDS

- The wetlands have always been a great place for exploration and learning. Some examples of how the wetlands are used by students are:
  - Students have monitored, maintained and repainted nesting boxes
  - Year 7 science classes wading into the lake to collect water samples to test for clarity, acidity/basicity and salt levels (turbidity, pH and salinity)
  - In 2017, a Year 11 Environmental Science class began the Cornish College Avian Monitoring Program, to monitor the biodiversity of bird species in the school wetlands



# DIVERSITY OF ANIMALS

- Diversity is important in relation to fauna and flora at Cornish and the EcoCentre
- A ram was added this year so we can begin breeding some sheep
- We also have alpacas, chickens, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, reptiles and fish in other parts of the school and a school dog
- The diversity in flora attracts greater species of birdlife to Cornish. During Term 3, plovers set up nest and lay eggs on the school golf course
- The engagement of students in the day-to-day operation of the farm continues to increase



# FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- The island will be cleared of boxthorn, and melaleuca will be planted by the edge of the lake. The additional flora will continue to encourage more local fauna
- Two large yabby ponds have been donated, so we can begin producing yabbies
- The wetlands will be extended
- A sink/kitchen area is being built for cleaning produce and a BBQ could also be added
- Any additional stock of eggs laid can be used to trade for more poultry with a local farm
- We hope to purchase more bee suits
- Student artwork is to be integrated
- A second aquaponics system
- Additional animal pens are to be built to add further diversity
- Cornish have an exchange relationship with a school in France. We will acknowledge the work of the French exchange students, which will continue into the future

French exchange students getting a taste of Cornish life. Plant stock for cuttings and seed for our plant nursery #schoolgarden #gardening



# PARENTS, TEACHERS & COMMUNITY

- Students and staff are truly passionate about the EcoCentre and the opportunities that our 100-acre classroom affords them
- We run the 100-Acre Club which is designed to give our alumni, parent community and friends of Cornish an opportunity to have a positive influence on the property through land management
  - The group has become a very important part of the College, becoming an additional resource, and maintaining their connection with Cornish
  - One generous parent donated a second hot house to the EcoCentre to build a second aquaponics system



# CONCLUSION

- *“The children are explorers, philosophers, entomologists, physicists, biologists, ornithologists, builders, mathematicians, geographers, negotiators, poets, actors, collaborators and problem solvers.”*  
This is an extract taken from one of our teacher’s articles, published for the International Baccalaureate’s Sharing Primary Years Programme blog
- Our community firmly believe in the benefits of outdoor learning and the proof is in the class activity being taken outside where students can be hands-on, making their own discoveries, igniting their passions and taking risks in a safe and supportive environment
- We are very proud of the work being done and how the EcoCentre continues to evolve and be utilised in even more dynamic and diverse ways





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