Department of Education

St George State High School (2143)

School Environmental Management Plan 2025-2027

Queensland Government

Contents

1. Planning Period

SEMP Type: Working document		
Start date: 1/01/2025		End date: Click or tap to enter a date.
SEMP Description	Use this section to describe any details about this SEMP for example: April PD Trial SEMP.	
Contributors	Thomas J. McKenna (Principal) Ben Lawson (Business Manager) Caitlin Crowe (Head of Department – Agriculture, Technology, Arts)	

2. Principal's Statement

Thomas J. McKenna

At St George State High School, we are committed to developing environmental, sustainable, and globally responsible citizens. We believe that every student should understand the importance of the environment and be equipped with the knowledge and skills to make a positive impact. This commitment extends across our curriculum and school practices, ensuring that sustainability is embedded in both what we teach and how we operate.

As an Agricultural School of Excellence, we recognise the vital role that sustainable agricultural practices play in shaping the future. We are continuously aligning our teaching and operations with industry best practices, fostering a strong connection between agriculture and environmental stewardship. This approach not only supports our students' learning but also strengthens our community's connection to the land and sustainable farming.

We are particularly mindful of our high Indigenous student population, and we understand the cultural significance of environmental awareness. In line with Indigenous perspectives, we acknowledge the deep connection to land and water, reinforcing the importance of sustainability as a core value in our school. Since 2023, we have actively worked to integrate sustainability into all aspects of school life. From energy efficiency initiatives to waste reduction, we strive to set a strong example for our students and the wider community. Through our agricultural programs and environmental practices, we aim to provide our students with the tools to lead the way in sustainable farming and eco-conscious living.

This School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) is a key part of our journey. It reflects our ongoing commitment to creating a more sustainable future, where environmental and agricultural excellence go hand-in-hand. By working together as a school community, we are confident that we can make lasting, positive change for both our students and the world around us.

3. School Overview

Vision/mission statement

Empowering Today's Students to Embrace the True Meaning of Our School Motto: 'Together We Achieve'.

Environmental vision:

School vision and goals for the environment

At St George State High School, our vision is to empower students to become environmentally responsible global citizens who actively contribute to the sustainability of our local and global communities. We aim to foster a culture where sustainable practices are embedded in everything we do—both in our agricultural education and within the broader school environment. We strive to create a school that nurtures a deep connection to the land, respects Indigenous cultural values, and leads by example in implementing practices that protect and preserve our natural world for future generations.

School profile and background

St George State High School is an Agricultural School of Excellence, located along the scenic Balonne River in St George, Queensland. As a central hub in the Southwest, St George holds significant historical and cultural importance, both for the broader Australian community and, importantly, for the Indigenous peoples whose deep connection to the land has shaped the area for millennia.

Our school is a co-educational institution serving students from grades 7 through 12, with a strong commitment to providing high-quality education tailored to the diverse goals and aspirations of all our students. At St George State High, we pride ourselves on our ability to offer a broad and inclusive curriculum, designed to equip students with the skills they need to succeed in their chosen futures.

A standout feature of our school is our focus on agricultural education, which reflects the agricultural heritage and close-knit nature of our community. This emphasis on agriculture allows us to provide students with hands-on learning opportunities, preparing them for careers in the industry while promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

We are also deeply committed to fostering a school culture based on our core values of Accountability, Courtesy, and Engagement. These values form the foundation of our educational approach, guiding both our academic and personal development programs. Through these values and a holistic approach to teaching, we aim to nurture students who are not only academically capable but also responsible, respectful, and engaged citizens, ready to face the challenges and opportunities of the future.

School logo or photo

4. About Your Local Area

Describe your environment

St George, situated in the Balonne Shire, faces several environmental challenges that are important for our school community to understand and address. The region's semi-arid climate, combined with agricultural practices, has a significant impact on both the local environment and the community's sustainability efforts.

- **Salinity**: One of the key issues in the region is soil salinity, which occurs when water-soluble salts accumulate in the soil, often as a result of irrigation and natural processes. Salinity reduces soil fertility, affects plant growth, and threatens agricultural productivity. Sustainable land management practices are essential to mitigating the effects of salinity and maintaining soil health.
- **Biodiversity**: The area is home to a variety of native plant and animal species, but these ecosystems are under threat from habitat degradation, invasive species, and human activity. Conservation efforts are vital to preserving local biodiversity and protecting natural habitats. The school can play a role by promoting environmental awareness and supporting local conservation initiatives.
- **Water Management**: The Balonne River and its tributaries are critical for irrigation and maintaining the region's agricultural systems. Efficient water use is crucial in this semi-arid region, especially given the frequent challenges posed by drought and low rainfall. Sustainable water management practices, such as efficient irrigation and water conservation, are necessary to ensure the long-term health of these vital water resources.
- **Climate Variability and Drought**: The region is highly susceptible to climate variability, with frequent droughts impacting both agricultural productivity and local water supplies. St George State High School can integrate climate adaptation strategies into its curriculum, helping students understand the importance of drought resilience and preparing them to manage climate-related challenges in their future careers.
- **Land Degradation**: Intensive farming practices can lead to soil erosion and land degradation, threatening the fertility of the land and agricultural productivity. Sustainable agricultural practices, such as crop rotation and no-till farming, are key to reducing erosion and maintaining healthy soil. The school's agricultural programs can play a central role in promoting these practices to future generations of farmers.
- **Invasive Species**: Invasive species, both plant and animal, pose a threat to local ecosystems and agricultural systems. These species often outcompete native species, disrupting ecological balance. Effective management and control of invasive species are crucial to maintaining healthy ecosystems and supporting local agriculture.

Describe the local community

St George State High School is a remote school located in the Balonne Shire, with an ICSEA of approximately 820. The school serves a diverse community, with about 50% of its student population identifying as Indigenous. The primary industries in the region are agriculture, tourism, health and education, which play a significant role in shaping both the local economy and the school's educational offerings.

The school has established strong connections with the community through its School-Based Traineeship and Apprenticeship program, which operates two days a week. This initiative supports local industries by providing a pipeline of future workers while offering students the opportunity to begin their trade training.

St George SHS has also revitalized its partnership with the local agricultural industry and the Department of Primary Industries. This collaboration is further strengthened by the Agriculture, Water & Environment (AWE) partnership with the Balonne Shire Council. The AWE focus is a central part of the school's priorities, ensuring that agricultural education and environmental sustainability are emphasized in the curriculum.

A key feature of this partnership is the Agricultural Careers-Education camp, which brings students from across Australia to St George SHS and the Balonne Shire. During the camp, students explore various agricultural career pathways and engage with industry experts. Other programs associated with the AWE initiative include the Blue Light Shearing program and educational opportunities for junior secondary and primary school students, all contributing to the community's growth and the students' learning experiences.

https://stgeorgeshs.eq.edu.au/extra-curricular/camps-and-excursions/agriculture-water-and-environment

Local area photograph

5. School Management

What are the priorities in your school plan?

We have 4 strategic priorities of: Culture, Curriculum, Pedagogy, Community

We have a strong focus on reading/literacy to improve outcomes for students across the board.

We have a strong focus on improving engagement and retention for all St George SHS students.

We have a strong focus, within our Agriculture and AWE collaboration, to raise the profile of agriculture (which included sustainable agricultural practices such as sustainable technology, regenerative ag, water conservation, indigenous / land management, etc…)

How is the plan integrated within whole school planning? (Choose from the list)

☐ Part of the school annual plan

☐ Reported on in the school annual report

☒ Integrated with relevant school policies

☐ Integrated with school administration and management procedures

☒ Integrated with curriculum programs

☐ Information provided in the school prospectus

☒ Consultation with Student Representative body

☒ Links to regional education and local government planning

☒ Links to extra-curricular activities for students

☐ Other, please specify

6. School Team

- Principal
- Business Manager
- School Community Partnership Facilitator (SCPF)
- Head of Department (Agriculture, Technologies, Art)
- Head of Department (Science, Mathematics)
- Science Lab Tech
- Agricultural Program Officer
- Student Council

What is the name of the environmental team?

There is no *standalone* environmental team. As a small, remote school we work collectively to embed practice across our organisation.

What is the size of the team?

The whole school and community. We receive community support for much that we do.

Who are the people involved? (Choose from the list)

☒ Teachers	☒ Students	☒ P and C
☐ Administration and support staff	☒ Grounds staff	☒ School principal
☒ Community groups (Local Decision Making Body)	☒ Community members	☐ Neighbours

☒ Council staff (Balonne Shire Council)	☒ Elected Student Representative body (Student Council)	☐ Executive staff
☐ Other, please specify:		

Describe the team's focus, structure and meeting information

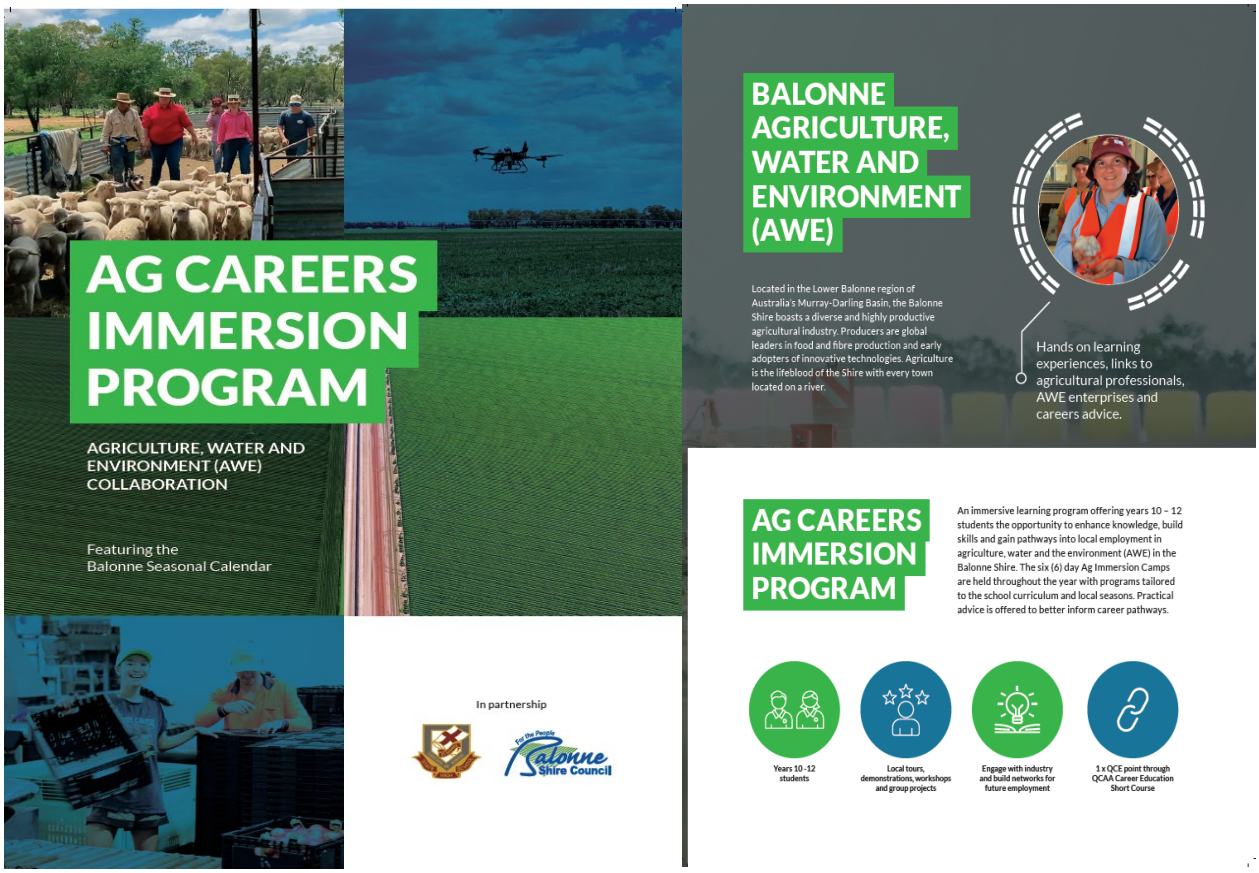
The school's environmental team is not a traditional group that you would find in larger, inner-city schools. People often talk about community, but we live community. Our school not only is part of the community, but the community is part of the school. We have many facets to embedding our SEMP.

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Balonne Shire Council regarding the AWE collaboration.
- School involvement with Murray Service Providers, the Local Decision-Making Body, and the Rangers regarding indigenous land care.
- Agricultural collaborations regarding sustainable agriculture.
- Student Council (involves school captains) set up school goals regarding different projects, environmentalism being one.

Describe the school's main environmental education achievements

- Our biggest achievement is our collaboration between industry partners and the school. ***Environmental industries*** that currently working with us included: regenerative farming, RDO, carbon farming, container farmers. (can expand on this one – ***circular economy***?)
- We have a strong recycling program between the P&C, school staff, and containers for change.
- We have started teaching regenerative Ag in our ag classes.
- Environmental education is a focus of some science units.
- We have a program called STRIVE (St George Resilience, Integrity, Virtue education) which teach leadership, stewardship, social-emotional programs, and environmentalism/sustainability.
- Alternative energy and microgrids? – solar, hydrogen and hybrid models Sustainable aviation fuel,

Photo of achievement



7. Goals for Five Focus Areas

Goals for Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

The Sustainability Education Management Plan (SEMP) will support the integration of environmental education into our high school curriculum, with the following key goals:

1. Encourage critical thinking and problem-solving through sustainability challenges
    - Students will engage in real-world sustainability challenges, developing research, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
2. Incorporate sustainability within ethical and civic education
    - Environmental issues will be explored through ethical and civic lenses, promoting responsible citizenship and advocacy for sustainable practices.
3. Promote hands-on environmental projects and community involvement
    - Practical projects, like recycling programs and local environmental action, will enable students to apply their learning in real-world contexts.
4. Ensure environmental skills develop progressively from Years 7-12
    - Environmental education will build progressively from Years 7-12, preparing students to take informed action on sustainability issues.

Goals for Management of Resources Energy, Waste and Water

Energy Efficiency

- Reduce overall energy consumption by 10% over the next two years through student-led energy audits and infrastructure improvements (e.g., LED lighting, solar panels – zero cost, low cost and larger capital cost projects e.g., solar)).
- Increase student and staff awareness of energy use by developing school-wide processes for supporting energy efficiency.
- Incorporating circular economy including energy efficiency in the design and operations of future capital projects and facilities.

Waste Minimisation

- Implement a waste separation and reduction program consisting of recycling of cans and bottles, recycling of appropriate materials, and composting of composting materials. Seek to develop processes for monitoring and tracking of waste that is diverted from landfill through composting, recycling, and student-led waste audits.
- Educate students, families and teachers on waste minimisation, waste is a resource and the impacts on landfill
- Engage students in a "Waste-Free Wednesday" initiative, encouraging plastic-free lunches and tracking participation rates. Also include biodegradable products – plates, cutlery, cups (e.g. starch based and minimising the use of one-off plastics and one-off use products in general
- Procurement - Buying from suppliers who are committed to and are minimising packaging, buy in bulk to minimise unit packaging.
- Work P&C (Tuckshop) on reducing packaging of products.
- Improve recycling of green waste in agricultural land instead of burning (e.g. mulching) and support green initiatives such as zero-till farming, crop rotations, cover crops, microbiome soil testing. Or using the green waste in proposed waste to energy projects.

- Food waste (pre)– buying from local producers “odd bunch” and incorporating into the Tuckshop and catering. Also includes Procurement from groups that also adopt this practice (Farmers Pick, OddProd, Second Bite, possible project with Goondir Well-Being Centre)
- Locally prepared meals from local products reducing carbon footprints/embedded emissions, freshness and reduced waste – longer shelf lives
- Identify and implement actions in order to extend product shelf-life to minimise waste
- Adopt First in First Out (FIFO) processes on food inventory
- Education on “best before” and “use by” dates on food packaging
- Food waste (post) – portion size control and food waste from meals -

Water Conservation*

*This is our biggest contextual concern – we have a drought provision in our budget

- Reduce water use through efficient irrigation systems and student-led monitoring of water meters.
- Minimise evaporation and surface runoff – optimal irrigation system planning
- Using heat pumps for quicker heating – both energy efficiency and water efficiency less water down the drain
- Slow leaks monitoring (including drips)
- Identify and implement water saving devices across the school (shower flow restrictors, timers)
- Consider trialling water producing condensation machines (water from the air) – drinking water (could be a small business venture for the school) – another is purezza.com.au (bottling distilled water locally and selling to local restaurants – recycling bottles)
- Establish a waterwise garden project integrating Indigenous perspectives on sustainable land and water use.
- Work with industry partners to trial innovative water conservation techniques on agricultural land (ie bank-less irrigation) to feedback to local agricultural community. e.g., possible R&D opportunities with companies such as Waterstart.com

Goals for Management of School Grounds including Biodiversity

Enhancing Biodiversity

- Increase native plant diversity by 30% in the next three years through tree-planting programs, focusing on species that support local pollinators and wildlife.
- Establish a Bush Tucker Garden in collaboration with Indigenous elders and Indigenous businesses (e.g., My Dilly Bag), connecting cultural knowledge with environmental education.
- Grow and harvest bush tucker plants for education and commercial opportunities and sell to local businesses and existing supply chains and use the proceeds for educational purposes or re-investment at the school.

Outdoor Learning Spaces

- Develop an outdoor learning place / indigenous garden by 2026, integrating sustainable materials and native plantings and bush tucker.
- Support the development of an “environmental” section of our Ag-Plot which supports biodiversity of the local area.
- Incorporate hands-on environmental education, using these spaces to support Science, Geography, and Agricultural studies.

Understanding Learning Opportunities in the Grounds

- Conduct student-led biodiversity audits annually to track changes in local ecosystems and inform grounds management decisions.

- Work with industry and university programs around developing further opportunities for students.

Goals for Integrated Whole School Planning

Curriculum Integration

- Embed Agriculture & Environmentalism as a Cross-Curriculum priority by aligning lessons with the SEMP's focus areas.
- Realign school camps to better support the initiatives outlined in the SEMP.
- Embed sustainability as a topic for the student council and student leadership team. – Consider this as a focus for the next strategic plan.

Linking Sustainability to School Priorities

- Connect sustainability initiatives with the AWE Career Education Program and Agricultural Subjects.
- Incorporate sustainability topics into Senior Pathways and VET programs, exploring career links in environmental management and conservation.
- Be part of a larger regional and state-wide program with education providers and providers around sustainability, emerging areas and trends and industry.

Goals for School and Community Partnerships

Strengthening Community Collaboration

- Further partnerships with local farms, council, and agricultural groups to develop an environmental internship program for senior students, linking sustainability with career pathways.
- Expand connections with Indigenous community members to integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into sustainability initiatives.

Student-Led Community Projects

- Continue to support student-led community projects in STRIVE lessons.

Annual Sustainability Events

- Seek to initiate an annual sustainability event that involves community and other stakeholders.

8. Plan Issues and Topics

Issue/Topic: Sustainable Agriculture
Description: The school's Agricultural Program of Excellence has the potential to trial more sustainable farming techniques to be used broadly.

Concern: High

Outcome: Integrate sustainable farming practices into the curriculum and school farm operations.

Indicators:

- Implementation of water-efficient irrigation techniques
- Increased use of organic compost and soil regeneration methods
- Embed Knowledge into AWE programming

Timeframe 2024-2027

Category: Grounds Usage

Indicators:

Picture:

Issue/Topic: Indigenous Land and Cultural Connections

Description: Opportunities exist to enhance Indigenous perspectives across the school. Lack of formalised engagement with local Indigenous Elders and cultural land management practices.

Concern: High

Outcome: Incorporate Indigenous knowledge into school sustainability initiatives.

Indicators:

- Development of a Bush Tucker Garden in collaboration with Indigenous community members
- Regular cultural workshops focusing on land management and biodiversity
- Embed knowledge in to AWE Programming.

Timeframe 2025-2026

Category: School Community Participation

Indicators:

Picture:

Issue/Topic: Sustainable Practices (Energy, Water and Waste)

Description: High levels of energy consumption impacting sustainability and increasing operational costs.

Concern: High

Outcome: Implement energy-saving initiatives and raise awareness within the school community.

Indicators:

- Reduction in overall school energy consumption
- Increased use of solar power, energy-efficient lighting and other energy saving devices and actions
- Develop more sustainable water practices and reduction in overall school water consumption
- Reduction in overall school waste

Timeframe 2026-2027

Category: Energy Management

Indicators:

Picture:

9. Strategies and Actions

Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Actions

Strategy: Other Integrate sustainable agricultural practices and Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum.
Action: Develop sustainability-focused lesson plans in Agriculture, Science, and Humanities, incorporating Indigenous land management principles.
Timeframe: Term 3, 2025 – Ongoing
Resources: Teaching materials, training for staff, guest speakers from Indigenous and agricultural communities
Monitoring: Review lesson plans and student assessments
Responsibility: Curriculum Leaders, Sustainability Coordinator

Management of Resources Energy, Waste and Water Actions

Strategy: Encourage energy saving practices
Action: Implement school-wide energy audits, water-saving initiatives, and waste-reduction programs such as recycling, *composting and circular economy concepts.*
Timeframe: Term 3, 2025 – Term 1, 2026
Resources: TBD… Solar Panels, Compost Bins, etc...
Monitoring: Develop tracking strategies for waste reduction, review of quarterly bills Year on Year and quarterly (seasonal) and comparison energy consumption, review of water consumption bills and tracking to previous periods.
Responsibility: Agriculture, House Groups, Grounds & Facilities

Management of School Grounds Including Biodiversity Actions

Strategy: Undertake grounds planning
Action: Increase biodiversity within school grounds through sustainable land use practices. Establish a Bush Tucker Garden in collaboration with Indigenous Elders and plant 100+ native trees to support local biodiversity.
Timeframe: 2025-2027
Resources: Plants, gardening tools, expertise from local Indigenous community members
Monitoring: Growth of bush tucker plants
Responsibility: Principal, BM, Agriculture Team, SCPF, CEC

Integrated Whole School Planning Actions

Strategy: Use the SEMP to identify annual environmental priorities
Action: Conduct an annual environmental audit to assess progress and set new sustainability goals. Integrate sustainability initiatives into curriculum planning and school operations.
Timeframe: Annually (2025-2027)
Resources: SEMP document, staff professional development, environmental audits, external stakeholders
Monitoring: Annual Environmental Priorities document
Responsibility: Principal, BM, Agriculture Team, Student Council

School and Community Partnerships Actions

Strategy: Other - Strengthen community collaboration in sustainability projects.
Action: Continue to develop community partners for AWE and its expansion. Particular focus for developing partners in environmental careers and indigenous land care.
Timeframe: Ongoing
Resources: people
Monitoring: AWE partners list
Responsibility: HOD - Ag

10. Plan promotion strategy

Promotion strategy: Regular updates in the school newsletter
Further details: Very active social media network (Facebook and LinkedIn) that reach other schools and departments.

11. Community and Environmental Network

Name: Not Applicable at this point in time.
Type: Other
Contact details:
Type of assistance:

12. Evaluating School Achievements

Select a focus area: Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Further details: Documented lessons in Humanities, Agriculture, and Science

Select a focus area: Management of Resources - Energy, Waste and Water
Further details: First initiative - developed process for waste reduction (different bins)

Select a focus area: Management of School Grounds including Biodiversity
Further details: Rollout of new bin/recycling program

Select a focus area: Integrated Whole School Planning
Further details: audit document

Select a focus area: School and Community Partnerships
Further details: Continue development and delivery of AWE camps.