

Media Release

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20 Aussie schools secure \$100K from Coles to supercharge sustainability projects

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Coles and Planet Ark have partnered up to spur on the next generation of eco-champions, this week, awarding 20 Australian schools a share in \$100,000 to help fund sustainability initiatives as part of the inaugural Coles & Planet Ark Sustainable Schools Competition.

Announced during Planet Ark's National Recycling Week, 20 schools from across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia were recognised for their commitment to protecting and enhancing the environment and will each receive \$5,000 to drive sustainability at their school.

From the construction of a wheelchair accessible edible garden to a sewing club that combats fast fashion, and a sustainable habitat to help save a rare and endangered butterfly, the competition aims to empower students to take action and help create a more sustainable future.

Wandin North Primary School in Melbourne's Yarra Ranges was one of the winning entrants with its innovative project to restore land and create small habitat retreats for local mammals which were damaged following a large storm in 2021.

Sustainability and Environment Teacher Laura Attrill said Wandin North students were passionate about the environment and always coming up with new ways to protect the plants and animals within the community.

"We lost a significant amount of canopy cover when a storm tore through our school three years ago and we then lost another three old gum trees during a more recent storm this year, so this prize will allow us to add small mammal boxes, bird boxes and rope bridges within the bushland area to provide a safe haven for our local animals," Laura said.

"This grant will provide our students with valuable learning experiences as they hope to see more tree-living mammals returning to the school once the rope bridges and habitat boxes are installed."

With more than 160 applications received throughout the competition, Coles Chief Commercial and Sustainability Officer Anna Croft said she was impressed by the broad range of initiatives and high standard of applications from schools across the country.

"The quality of projects submitted by students and teachers in the inaugural Coles & Planet Ark Sustainable Schools competition was extraordinary and further demonstrated the incredible passion that young people have for protecting our planet," said Anna.

"Whether it's finding a solution for fast fashion, working to protect a threatened species or a native-Australian plant, to developing a school-wide composting and recycling system, it's clear that this next generation is ready and willing to make a real impact.

“We’re proud to work alongside our partner Planet Ark to help create a more sustainable future, one school at a time.”

Planet Ark CEO Rebecca Gilling said the organisation was pleased to partner with Coles to encourage more Aussie students to 'Join the Cycle' this National Recycling Week and help improve their school's sustainability report card.

“This competition is an excellent way to engage the next generation in sustainability. The prize of \$5,000 will make a tangible difference to these environmental initiatives, while educating students and empowering them to feel part of the solution,” said Rebecca.

“We were incredibly impressed by the quality of the entries in this first year of the competition and incredibly proud of the students and teachers who have come up with these brilliant plans to improve the environment around them and the community they live in,” she added.

Planet Ark's National Recycling Week runs from 11 to 17 November and Coles is proud to be the major sponsor for a third consecutive year. To find out more, visit nationalrecyclingweek.com.au.

The complete list of 20 competition winners include:

Queensland

- Holland Park State School, Holland Park, Brisbane
- Parramatta State School, Cairns

New South Wales

- Adamstown Public School, Newcastle
- John Therry Catholic College, Rosemeadow, Sydney
- Macquarie University Special Education School, Macquarie Park, Sydney
- Paterson Public School, Hunter Valley
- St Joseph's Primary Woodburn, Woodburn
- Warrawong High School, Wollongong

Victoria

- Altona College, Altona, Melbourne
- Rushworth P-12 College, Rushworth
- St Anthony School, Noble Park, Melbourne
- St Peter's Primary School, Bentleigh East, Melbourne
- Trentham District Primary School, Trentham
- Viewbank Primary School, Viewbank, Melbourne
- Wandin North Primary School, Yarra Ranges
- Waratah Special Development School, Bellfield, Melbourne

South Australia

- East Marden Primary School, Campbelltown, Adelaide
- Prescott Primary Northern, Para Vista, Adelaide

Western Australia

- Mary's Mount Primary School, Gooseberry Hill, Perth
- Roebuck Primary School, Broome



Image: Wandin North Primary School students Phoebe, Mason, Hugo, Zara and Mia

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