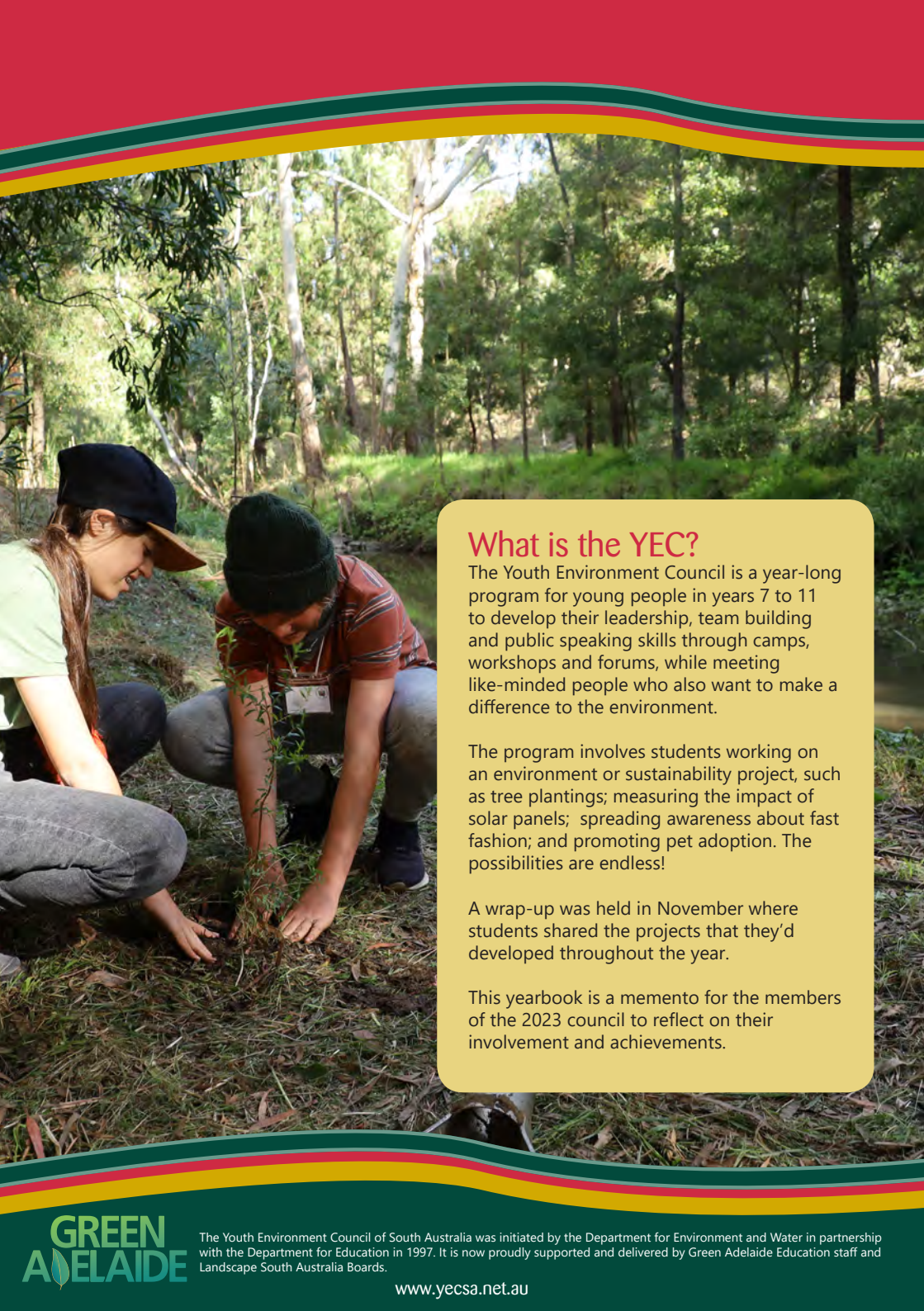


Youth Environment Council South Australia



YEARBOOK
2023

GREEN
ADELAIDE



What is the YEC?

The Youth Environment Council is a year-long program for young people in years 7 to 11 to develop their leadership, team building and public speaking skills through camps, workshops and forums, while meeting like-minded people who also want to make a difference to the environment.

The program involves students working on an environment or sustainability project, such as tree plantings; measuring the impact of solar panels; spreading awareness about fast fashion; and promoting pet adoption. The possibilities are endless!

A wrap-up was held in November where students shared the projects that they'd developed throughout the year.

This yearbook is a memento for the members of the 2023 council to reflect on their involvement and achievements.

2023 Program

TERM 1

Mentor Training Day (YEC Mentors only), Adelaide Botanic Garden

Week 6: Thursday 9 March

Mentors came together to develop mentoring and facilitation skills and assist with YEC event planning.

TERM 2

Welcome Forum, Belair National Park

Week 1: Thursday 30 March

All students were invited to attend this day, where we shared ideas, learnt new skills and got to know each other.

Online Discussion Forum

The forum was used throughout the year from the first event to the last event so that everyone could stay in touch and share their progress or interesting experiences and discoveries.

Two-night Camp, Arbury Park Outdoor School

Week 3: Monday 17 - Wednesday 19 April

Camp was an opportunity to join in fun team building exercises, and build skills in leadership and teamwork. We further developed our skills and knowledge on environmental and sustainability themes and ways to take action.

Monthly Online Catchups via Zoom

An opportunity for members to share and troubleshoot their projects, as well as hear from guest speakers and participate in online workshops.

TERM 4

YEC Sharing Forum, Adelaide Botanic Garden

Week 8: Thursday 9 November

At the final event, we shared and celebrated your environmental achievements, and reflected on actions and changes as a group.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

- Aberfoyle Park High School
- Adelaide Botanic High School
- Adelaide High School
- Berri Regional Secondary Collage
- Christies Beach High School
- Eastern Fleurieu School 7-12 Campus
- Glenunga International High School
- Grant High School
- Investigator College
- Keith Area School

- Loxton High School
- Millicent High School
- Mount Compass Area School
- Parafield Gardens R-7
- Port Lincoln High School
- Sacred Heart Middle School
- Salisbury High School
- Seymour College
- St Ignatius College
- St Mary's College

- St Michaels College
- St Peters College
- Tatchilla Lutheran Collage
- Unley High School
- Urrbrae Agricultural High School
- Willunga High School
- Woodcroft College



Distribution of participating schools.

2023 YEC MENTORS



Callum

I love the beauty of nature and the complexity of the ecosystem. I also love all the animals, especially birds.



Django

I love every factor of the environment; I try to look around everywhere and test my knowledge by seeing if I can name all the birds and the indigenous plants by their Latin name. I especially love birds, they are beautiful and complex animals that surprise me every time I see one.



Layla

I love to surround myself in nature and admire the natural wildlife. Whether that be swimming at my local beach or hiking deep within the forest.



Lilli

I love the way that nature can change, develop and grow, creating habitats and homes for animals. I love the noises and sounds that nature brings. My walks in the morning and my runs at night. I love all the different colours it brings and the foods I can grow. It makes me happy.



Olivia

I love spending time outdoors whether that's hiking, walking my dog or playing sport. I have a passion for horse riding and love spending time with all kinds of animals.



Ruby

One part of nature that I love is the 'waterhole'. The 'waterhole' is what my family calls the block of land my Pa, who is my grandfather, owns! Some parts I love about it are the waterhole itself, the small waterfall nearby, and a special tree that my great-grandfather planted!

An excellent, fun experience that is great for you to learn about leadership and public speaking as well as environmental work.



Student leaders growing new skills in the garden

The Youth Environment Council of South Australia (YEC) uses an effective and engaging peer-learning model, involving experienced YEC members being selected to support Green Adelaide staff to mentor their fellow YEC students from across SA.

This year's six mentors have just completed a training day with Green Adelaide staff at Adelaide Botanic Garden in the heart of the city.

They helped staff plan this year's YEC activities and during the year they will further develop their self-confidence, leadership, public speaking and group work skills by acting as encouraging and supportive role models for this year's YEC members. They will also deliver engaging activities to help the members bond into a united council during the year.

After having some time to reconnect and explore their beautiful surroundings, the mentors were asked to remember the challenges they experienced when first arriving at YEC events, brainstorm what makes effective leaders, and understand their own thinking and learning styles. The mentors provided feedback to staff, shared their visions and goals for the YEC, and developed and practiced skills techniques to support their fellow YEC members. These included starting and holding conversations, supporting members to make friends and encouraging participation in activities.

In just a few weeks they will use their newly learnt leadership skills at the Welcome Forum in Belair National Park, the first event for students chosen as members for this year's YEC. The Welcome Forum will be followed soon after by a three-day overnight camp at Arbury Park Outdoor School.

The YEC mentoring program is an integral part of training emerging leaders in the Youth Environment Council which has been running in South Australia since 1997.



Welcome Forum 2023

On Thursday 30 March, the latest cohort of Youth Environment Council (YEC) representatives were welcomed through the gates of Belair National Park, greeted by the fresh outdoors, local fauna and Green Adelaide Education staff, to kick off the first event for all of the YEC this year. It allowed the 40 high school students to come together, with some travelling from areas as far afield as Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula, Murraylands and the South East of South Australia.

The day was focused on the students getting to know each other, sharing their local regions, experiences and passions, and thinking about the individual sustainability projects that they will work on in their schools and communities throughout the year. This was facilitated through a range of fun activities, including team building and leadership exercises, sharing project ideas, discussing sustainability topics and immersing in nature throughout the park.

Six YEC mentors helped guide these activities with lots of enthusiasm and they greatly assisted the Green Adelaide Education team with making their fellow YEC members feel welcome. These mentors will continue to play an important leadership role in supporting the next event for the year, a three-day leadership camp held at Arbury Park Outdoor School in Bridgewater, where the real project planning will get underway.





Arbury Park Leadership Camp 2023

In mid-April, Green Adelaide Education ran the annual Youth Environment Council of SA (YEC) Leadership Camp at Arbury Park Outdoor School (APOS) in the Adelaide Hills. APOS provided the perfect backdrop for YEC mentors and students to increase their skills in leadership, team building and project planning. The surrounding environments, including interconnected wetlands and native woodland, enabled the YEC students to participate in hands-on experiences and connect with nature.

Forty-three students were involved in both outdoor and indoor activities with the aims of building their skills as young changemakers, linking explicit learning to real world practice, and developing and planning the environmental projects they'll carry out as part of their involvement in the YEC. Student projects are based around sustainability issues they're passionate about in their school, local community or more widely. Among the wide range of topics they hope to tackle with their projects are revegetating to increase biodiversity; educating others about climate change; waste recovery at school; establishing a native food garden; creating a community garden; and protecting local wildlife.

Staff from Green Adelaide Education and APOS collaborated to deliver a program that actively encouraged the students to connect with nature, challenge themselves and think deeply about their goals. A highlight was a presentation around the campfire from First Nations storyteller and educator Trent Hill. YEC members learnt about Aboriginal culture and connection to Country; were shown various tools and discovered their uses; and were treated to a traditional story and animal sounds played on the Yidaki (didgeridoo).

Other camp highlights included orienteering; a night frog walk; Landcare along Cox Creek; hearing from others about their experiences volunteering, bushwalks and building new friendships. The YEC will continue to meet and connect online, while working on their environmental projects, ready to share at our end of year event in November.





THOUGHTS ABOUT BEING IN YEC

A good social experience to advance my leadership skills so I am connecting with likeminded people and learning from one another. This experience has exceeded my expectations and I have really enjoyed it.

My daughter has engaged in our community more, linking with libraries and community gardens due to her project. As well as the Port Environment Centre

I think that it gives us a chance to talk with like-minded students about something we are passionate about.

It is also nice to talk to people from other schools and different regions, as it gives us different perspectives on what happens and what are issues in certain places.

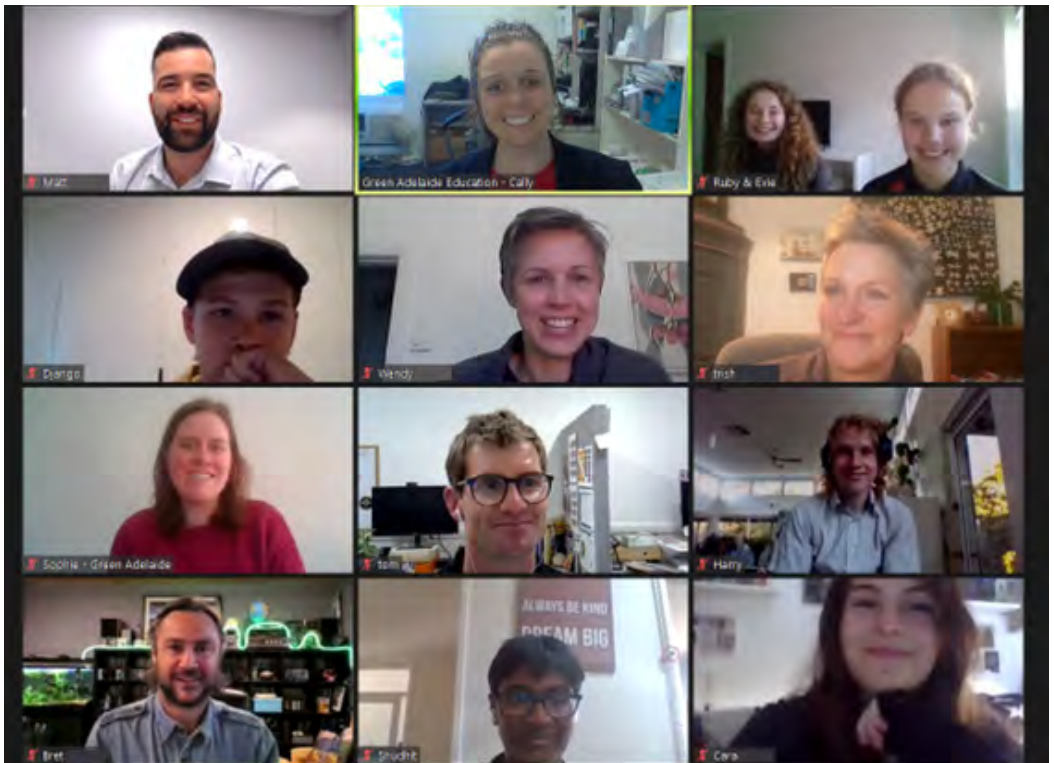
Very engaging! You'll learn so much and make heaps of friends.

I feel the that YEC program helps to give young, passionate people that helping hand they need to make a change. It helps people with discovering how to create projects, develops many skills and allows members to learn from like minded people. It leaves you with so much knowledge and a boost in confidence.

The benefits of being in the YEC program are meeting new like-minded people, learning about yourself and your world, and getting involved with conservation efforts.

The purpose of the YEC is to help bring awareness to climate change and it is a welcoming space for young people to connect with one another with similar interests and learn about the environment.

Thank you for providing this fantastic opportunity to my daughter. Not all high-achieving children have the opportunity/feel confident enough to be school leaders and have a platform to have a voice in a school of 900 kids, despite how amazing they are. YEC does this! Thank you!



Greater Adelaide Regional Plan consultation for young people

As the Youth Environment Council of South Australia is a leading youth organisation, the Department for Trade and Investment was eager to work with us to meaningfully engage young people in the community and bring their perspectives authentically into the development of the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan. The Plan will help determine:

- what Greater Adelaide might look like in 30 years - beyond 2050
- the needs and wants of current and future communities
- where and how we should grow.

Eight members of the YEC met with staff working with Green Adelaide education and the Department for Trade and Investment to discuss the YourSay questions related to the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan discussion paper.

Some of the questions included:

- What do you like about your current local neighbourhood?
- What do you think your local neighbourhood is missing?
- What would you like Adelaide to look like in 15 to 30 years' time?
- How can Greater Adelaide be more sustainable and respond to climate change?
- What are your concerns for the future of the Greater Adelaide region?

Submission content was scribed by Green Adelaide staff during the discussions then sent in on behalf of the YEC. One member also responded to the questions via email.





Recycled materials mosaic mural making session at Campbelltown Library

On Wednesday 11 October, the 4 city-based YEC mentors, with support from 2 Green Adelaide education officers, ran a recycled materials mosaic making session at Campbelltown library as party of this year's Nature Festival.

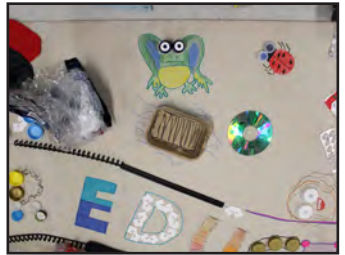
The mentors gave a presentation about litter and the impacts it can have on wildlife before leading the participants through the activity, which demonstrated how you can use "rubbish" in different ways, saving it from going straight to landfill while getting creative and making a beautiful piece of artwork.

The mentors had collected a range of materials at their schools and by their family and friends, which was complemented by materials that participants brought with them.

The items brought in for use included bottle tops, CDs, fabric, strips of leather, plastic containers, glossy magazines and cardboard, plastic tags, foil, cellophane and even some old shoes. These were added to the panels using hot glue guns, supplemented by textas, coloured pencils, crayons and oil pastels.

Two panels were completed on the day and they will be hung at one mentor's school, along with a third panel that will be created by students at the school, to form a large mural.







Bird walk and water bug hunt at Laratinga Wetlands, Mt Barker

On Thursday 12 October, five of the YEC Mentors ran another activity for the Nature Festival in the form of a bird walk and water bug hunt at Laratinga Wetlands, Mt Barker.

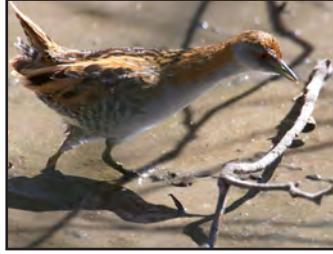
On the bird walk we waddled around the wetlands stopping when anything interesting was sighted so attendees were able to gain an understanding of what birdwatching is, why it is fun and for an understanding about how different habitats suit different birds.

As well as common species such as Pacific Back Ducks, Purple Swamphens, Welcome Swallows and Australasian Grebes, we were able to see rarer birds, including the Speckled Duck and Baillon's Crake, as well as nesting Australian Reed Warblers. There were also some turtles sunbathing on logs, which participants enjoyed seeing.

The rest of the event time was spent looking for water bugs at the water's edge.

Participants used nets to sample the wetlands for macroinvertebrates, transfer them to trays of water, and then observe them more closely to see what the wetlands have to offer.

The Mentors helped the younger children catch, spot and identify the different creatures, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the activity.





YEC students celebrate and reflect on their year

Twenty-six keen Youth Environment Council members descended upon the Adelaide Botanic Gardens to take part in the last event of the year, showcasing their year-long projects with friends, family and invited guests.

The weather was picture perfect - warm and sunny - and enabled members to get some much-needed time outdoors to connect with nature and each other. Members were given opportunities to take part in activities such as nature art using clay; making seed pods; undertaking a treasure hunt; and assessing habitat for birds, before sharing their projects.

Some of the many amazing projects they'd worked on included: raising awareness about bees; making their own sustainable beeswax wraps and beauty products; creating a documentary about a previous member; educating the community about the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo; revegetating habitats for birds; a litter clean-up of Little Para River; improving waste management at school; researching turtles in the Murray River; developing a school food garden; transforming waste materials into jewellery; and reducing urban heat.

This year students were also able to contribute to the Climate Conversations as part of the consultation on climate change policy being developed by the Department for Environment and Water.

Staff also facilitated a YEC review session for members to share all their insights into what they love (and don't love so much) about the YEC. Members provided quite touching feedback about what the Council has meant to them, what must be maintained and what could do with a tweak. It has provided staff with a fresh perspective on what the young people perceive as the most important elements and learning experiences.

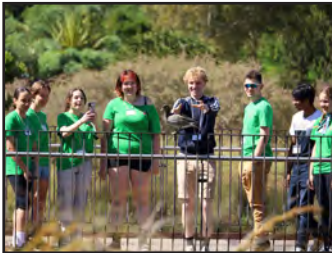
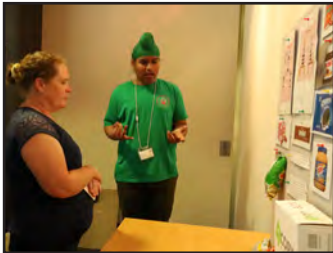
It was a beautiful lesson into the importance of consulting with the people whose lives will be impacted by decisions and the feedback provided will be used to refresh and build a stronger, more supportive program going forwards.

Reflecting back on this last event, there was a different energy from past years. There was a real excitement as members caught up with newly found friends in a way that appeared, to the outsider, as if they'd never been apart.

So many members commented on how they felt they had met 'their people' and that few students at their own schools shared the same passion for the environment or sustainability as they did. Even the conversations between staff and YEC members were a lot deeper, with many talking about their own experiences and hopes for the future.

As we farewell this year's members and look forward to the future of the YEC, one thing has been made abundantly clear; the YEC provides young people with the opportunity to connect with nature and with others and overall gives them a sense of belonging.

However we modify the YEC for future years, these elements will remain at the heart of the program's culture.



2023 YEC MEMBERS AND THEIR PROJECTS



Alexis

Set up a recycling station in the school office to collect plastics that were melted down and reused to create earrings.



Alice

Enlisted the support of the new school environment group to undertake weeding and planting native species at a local winery revegetation site.



Amelie

Introduced green bins at school to improve collection of organic waste. Prepared a PowerPoint presentation to show students how to use the bins.



Ashlee

Worked on making her backyard and school swamp wildlife-friendly and educated younger students about environmental issues.



Astyn

Upcycled scrap fabrics and plastics, including buttons, beads and bottle tops, to create earrings and other jewellery.



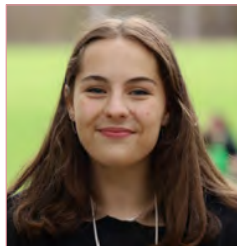
Bethany

Worked with the school environment group to plan a pollinator's paradise that will attract native animals.



Callum

Led a recycled materials mural making activity as part of the Nature Festival.



Cara

Led a clean up of Little Para River with the 14 students from the student action team.



Daniella

Worked with Elizabeth to produce a series of youtube videos about how to create vertical wall gardens.



Della

Worked with Lilli to prototype new containers and lunch boxes made from beeswax wraps using origami techniques.



Django

Created, restored and protected habitat for birds of the Fleurieu Peninsula. Established a plant nursery and erected nesting boxes.



Elizabeth

Worked with Daniella to produce a series of youtube videos about how to create vertical wall gardens.

I feel I have gained confidence, communication, and time management skills through YEC. All these skills will be helpful in the future.

2023 YEC MEMBERS AND THEIR PROJECTS



Ella

Worked with Ember to make jewellery out of donated buttons as an innovative way of diverting plastic from landfill.



Ember

Worked with Ella to make jewellery out of donated buttons as an innovative way of diverting plastic from landfill.



Emilie

Researched butterflies and bees and developed plans for a bee hotel that has a butterfly garden on top.



Emma

Worked with Eva on plans to establish a community garden.



Esther

Made scrunchies, wheat bags, lolly bags, baked cupcakes and undertook other fundraising activities to replenish the school bee hive.



Eva

Worked with Emma on plans to establish a community garden.



Evie

Held a bake sale - enlisting the support of an enthusiastic team of students - to raise funds to establish a worm farm at school.



Harry

Worked to remove invasive introduced pine trees from a natural heritage listed habitat.



Isabelle

Manufactured natural beeswax lip balms using Australian-sourced eco-friendly ingredients, packaged in reusable containers.



Jayden

Planned to start an environment group at school and hold a fundraiser for people affected by the Murray River flooding.



Jazmin

Continued researching and raising awareness about Red-Tailed Black Cockatoos, including publishing a book about them.



Jesse

Made a trailer for a documentary about a former YEC student and her work with dolphins off the Eyre Peninsula.

I learnt so much about how to plan a project and keep it in a timeframe but helping more people know about it.

2023 YEC MEMBERS AND THEIR PROJECTS



Kayleigh

The wattle seed planter - undertaking planning to grow edible wattle seeds at school and teach others about their uses.



Kelsey

Researched the importance of greenery in suburban areas to curb urban heat in order to inform the broader community.



Layla

Worked with Olivia to establish a native food garden and complete a booklet with bush tucker recipes.



Leo

Planned to research the effects of pharmaceutical products on the environment.



Lilli

Worked with Della to prototype new containers and lunch boxes made from beeswax wraps using origami techniques.



Luciann

Organised two clean up events to reduce litter at school and in the local community.



Mikayla

Wrote and created cartoon illustrations for a book on worms and the environment.



Olive

Undertook a project looking to reduce plastic use.



Olivia

Worked with Layla to establish a native food garden and complete a booklet with bush tucker recipes.



Paige

Taught younger students about littering, what to put in what bin, and what happens to the rubbish if it is littered.



Rajveer

Researched and raised awareness about palm oil products in the school canteen.



Riya

Worked towards establishing a butterfly garden.

An amazing group of fun, supportive people that help you complete an environmental project.

2023 YEC MEMBERS AND THEIR PROJECTS



Ruby

Started a garden group, and successfully applied for a grant of \$250 to develop an edible garden at the school.



Sage

Designed a mural featuring iconic local animals and plants, with Aboriginal artwork drawn by an Aboriginal friend.



Sana

Surveyed students about their environmental opinions and impacts. Spoke at assembly on simple ways that they can make positive impacts.



Sharli

Led a clothing swap to reduce the impacts of fast fashion on the environment.



Shudhit

Established a 'Care for Country' environmental group at school and undertook activities including tree planting and textile recycling.



Stella

Community Buzz - partnered with a local community garden to host a honey bee hive for pollination and bee education.



Trinity

Started researching the turtles of the Murray River, assisted with the local Landscape Board's Science Week event and is planning a fundraiser.



Willa

Planned to volunteer at the Laratinga Wetlands.

For more information about projects undertaken by members over the years, check out the **YEC projects** pages on the website:

www.yecsa.net.au/yec-projects.html

I'm happy with the help I received. It allowed me to be independent, but to help me get past obstacles.

