

# Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Australia – September 2023 Report

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## Acknowledgment of Country

### **Acknowledgment of Country**

Earthwatch Australia acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our company is located, and where we operate and educate through the Swarovski Waterschool Australia program. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present.

Earthwatch is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to Australian and global society. We recognise that sovereignty over these lands and waters was never ceded.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have cared for these lands long before we arrived, yet we all hold a responsibility to do our part, and to combine our efforts to help heal Country.



## Program Update

Earthwatch Australia remains the official local delivery partner for the Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Australia program.

The focus for this quarter was the planning, creation, and practice of peer-teaching workshops for participating schools for presentation at the Flagship Event and/or internally for school community engagement. Two participating schools have already completed their program deliverables for the year, producing Video Workshops about planting Indigenous Gardens and how to be water-wise while travelling globally. Case study examples of water successes have been created, and school journeys celebrated for the 4 schools participating in a third year of the Waterschool Australia program.

Three key events have been finalised for Term 4, and additional localised peer-teaching and on-ground action activities across NSW should result in indirect engagement well above the target for the 2023 program. Audience schools have been confirmed for Term 4 Waterschool events to further encourage participation in the 2024 program. One of these schools has already expressed their interest by completing the 2024 online application.

Though four Lead Teachers from four different participating schools have had to change staff positions this year, and another four prospective teachers were unable to gain senior staff approval to participate, NSW teachers have recently been successful in their bid to Government for increased salaries, support and resources, which should help to stabilise school participation in the Waterschool program moving forward.

Aboriginal Elder engagement was a focus for Term 3 meetings, to encourage further participation in Waterschool activities. The knowledge holder of the Water Ceremony has once again agreed to lead the Welcome to Country and ceremony at this year's Flagship Event, this time joined by her niece and sister, and all Elders showed eagerness to be a part of the 2024 program. These responses are evidence of strong relationship and trust building with Indigenous groups across the State.

Legacy building has been another key objective for this quarter, with experienced Lead Teachers agreeable to becoming Teacher Experts for the online sessions next year, and mentors for new teachers entering the program. Video workshops have been created, which will form a collative "hub" of peer-teaching workshop resources for water education activities that will grow year-on-year.

The latest meeting with the Swarovski Australia office included sharing a list of volunteers for this year's Flagship Event, and planning for possible store communications relating to the Waterschool program which are still undergoing consideration for the first or second quarter of 2024.

The Program Manager shared a summary video of the Waterschool Australia program with the Program Coordinator for Waterschool USA for a national online presentation to continue to foster global relationships, following the in-person Foundation 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event held in Wattens.

A new Program Coordinator has been welcomed to lead the Australian arm of the Waterschool program from mid-September; introduced to the Foundation team in Austria and to fellow national program co-ordinators during the September monthly meeting.

## Peer-teaching Workshops

Workshops were predominantly planned in Term 2, with follow-up visits to view workshop progression and assist with finishing elements carried out in Term 3. Schools that have elected to

carry out internal events and on-ground action projects for Term 4 have begun constructing video workshops, so these can be viewed by other schools across NSW and globally if relevant to Waterschool program aims and outcomes in other countries. Once finalised and recorded, video workshops will be added to the Education Resource Hub, accessible from the SFWS Australia web page on the Earthwatch website.

The Program Manager visited schools to view workshops, assist with presentation and performance elements, and to ensure a call to action was evident in the closing remarks. Overall, workshops have been created to a high quality with a good diversity of water topics and interactive activities for the 2023 program.

2023 Peer-teaching Workshop Topics include:

- How to grow food on Mars
- How to plant and care for an Indigenous Garden
- How to be a water-conscious global traveller
- How to overcome drought in regional Australia
- How hydropower is created from water
- How to build a habitat pond to encourage biodiversity
- How mulch retains water in soil
- How to conserve water with timed (shorter) showers

#### 2023 Term 4 Events and Action Projects

The table below outlines the 3 key events for the 2023 SFWS Australia program, followed by additional water-related community engagement activities across NSW (engagement numbers are provided as a best estimate following communications with Lead Teachers, and are to be confirmed following the end of year surveys).

Events	Description	Stakeholders	Estimated Attendance
2023 SFWS Australia Flagship Event	1 host school, 3 visiting schools, Welcome to Country and Water Ceremony, 16 peer-teaching workshop rotations	Students, teachers, Wangal Elder and support, Earthwatch employees, Swarovski volunteers	160 - 180
2023 Waterschool Expo	1 host school, 1 audience school, 14 peer-teaching rotations, turtle showcase, rain water catchment action project	Students, teachers, guardians, Earthwatch employee, EEC educator	100 - 120
2023 Water, History and Storytelling Day	1 school, 2 year levels, 12 workshop rotations, Elder yarning circle as a workshop station	Students, teachers, Dharawal Elder, Earthwatch employee	160 - 180
<b>Additional Activities</b>			
2023 School Action Day	1 host school, 1 audience school, peer-teaching workshops, community-led rain garden installation		80 - 100
2023 Peer-teaching Day	1 host school, 1 audience school, present workshop		30 - 50
2023 School Action Day	1 school, planting an Indigenous Garden		10 - 20
2023 School Action Day	1 school, planting an Indigenous Garden		10 - 20
2023 Youth Eco Summit	50 students presenting water information at this nation-wide event		50
<b>Total (approx.)</b>			<b>600 - 700</b>

## Media reach and engagement (July – Sept)

### Social media

Campaign	Platform	Post	Reach	Engagement Rate	Reactions	Saves	Impressions
World Water Week	<b>Posts</b>						
	Instagram	<a href="#">This World Water Week, Earthwatch Education Programs Manager Hannah Gentle shares her thoughts about how school-based environmental...   Instagram</a>	203	8.97%	20	3	234
	Facebook	<a href="#">Video   Facebook</a>	112				123
	<b>Total</b>	-	<b>315</b>	<b>8.97%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>357</b>

### Website

Website	
<b>SFWS Australia Landing Page</b>	<b>Total Page Views</b>
<a href="#">Swarovski Waterschool Australia Program   Earthwatch Institute</a>	72
<a href="#">Impact Report 2022 (earthwatch.org.au)</a>	208
Swarovski Waterschool Australia: The Nature School in Port Macquarie (earthwatch.org.au)	8
Visits to the Education Resource Hub: <a href="https://earthwatch.org.au/education/school-programs/swarovski-waterschool-australia/swarovski-waterschool-australia-education-resource-hub">https://earthwatch.org.au/education/school-programs/swarovski-waterschool-australia/swarovski-waterschool-australia-education-resource-hub</a>	2
<b>Earthwatch Australia Newsletter</b>	<b>Total Clicks</b>
Overall September Newsletter Opens	4,726
<b>SFWS Australia Program Online Application (clicks from Newsletter)</b>	<b>Total Clicks</b>
<a href="#">Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Australia Program Application Form (google.com)</a>	9
<a href="#">earthwatch.org.au/images/education/SWS/Swarovski Waterschool 2024 Flyer.pdf</a>	12

## Case studies

### GEDSI Indicators - Schools for Specific Purposes (SSP)

In line with the Equality pillar and mission statement of the Swarovski Foundation, two SSP schools have been included in the SFWS Australia program. SSP schools are safe spaces for students with autism and behavioural challenges to learn and develop key life skills, and have a high teacher to student ratio. Regularly excluded from student leadership programs such as Waterschool, these students rarely have the opportunity to use their voices and act collectively to inspire others to act in ways that protect water in their local area. Below are two case studies highlighting the many successes achieved by Coreen School and Ajuga School over the past three years in the Waterschool Australia program.

### Case study 1 – Ajuga School

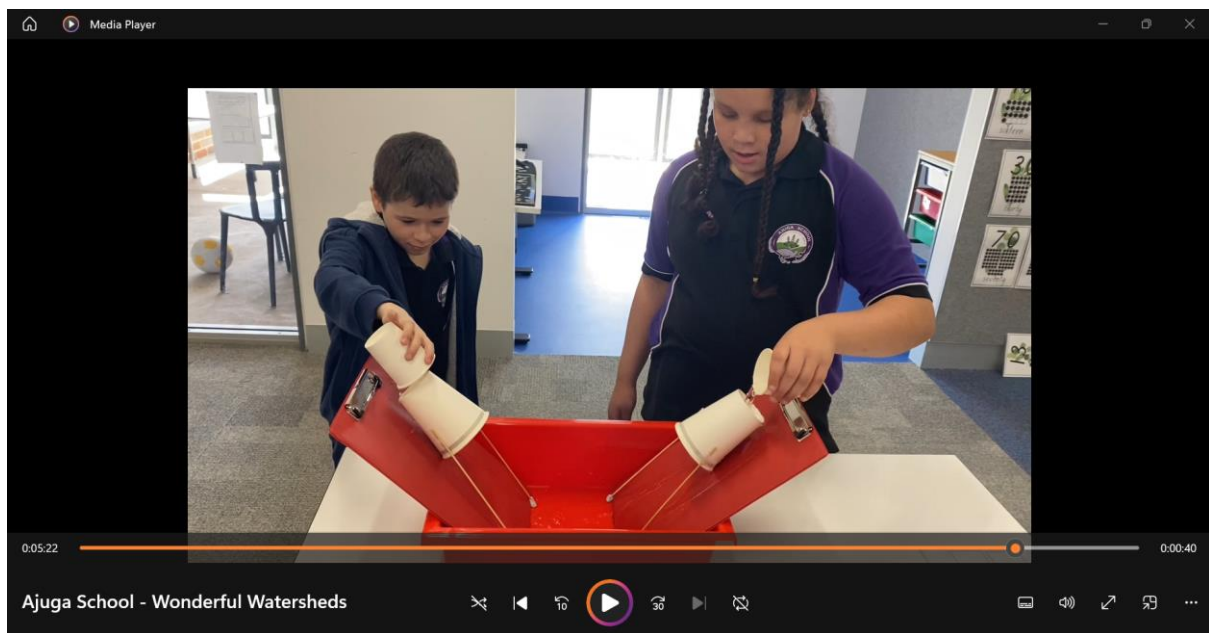
*Ajuga School is a School for Specific Purposes (SSP) based in Ajuga near the Georges River in New South Wales. After three years of participation in the Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Australia program, Ajuga teachers and students have learned about three annual water literacy topics (listed below). Each year, peer-teaching videos with interactive activities were created to teach other students from across NSW about the focal water topic.*

#### **Ajuga School – Focal Water Topics 2021 - 2023**

1. *Water pH testing using blueberries and cabbage as indicators of water health in their local area,*
2. *Local water shed investigation and modelling of how natural water flows and pools, creating habitat for water-loving plants and animals, and*
3. *Aboriginal culture and knowledge associated with Bush Tucker gardens, planting an Indigenous Garden with Rainbow Serpent art installation, and administering mulch in areas of school grounds that have naturally dry soils to retain moisture and reduce watering needs*



*Above: Ajuga School's 2021 peer-teaching workshop about how to test pH of water samples using red cabbage and blueberries as indicators.*



*Above: Ajuga School's 2022 peer-teaching workshop about their local water shed; working with nature to create habitat ponds where water naturally pools on school grounds.*

*This year, Ajuga students are creating a stop-motion video using personal artwork and small figurines to explain the importance of mulch and Indigenous plants to reduce water requirements for Ajuga's school gardens. This has been paired with the installation of a Bush Tucker Garden on school grounds to bring classroom learning to life and encourage wider school engagement.*

*The Lead Teacher, Nadine Draper, attended the Earthwatch Australia Expert online teacher training sessions "Water and Pollutants" lead by Chief Scientist Scott Wilson, and "Tidal Wetlands (Mangroves and Saltmarsh)" lead by Wetlands Program Manager Jock Mackenzie to build foundational water knowledge and gain advice about how to overcome Australia-specific water challenges. Nadine also utilised Module 5: Water and School in the SFWS Global Curriculum to aid in classroom learning prior to planting their school garden.*

*Local community engagement has included an Education Officer from the Georges River Environmental Education Centre who visits Ajuga School once a week to teach environmental concepts inclusive of water health assessment and protective actions. This local mentor has assisted the students and lead teacher to construct the Bush Tucker Garden. Native plants that feature include lemon myrtle, lomandra, Ajuga, and pig face. Ajuga's Aboriginal Education Officer lead the installation of art work within the Bush Tucker Garden, to represent the Rainbow Serpent creation story associated with the Parramatta River. Students placed hand prints onto upcycled tyres as part of their NAIDOC Week activities, to represent their spiritual connection to the local waterways.*

*A school excursion to a nearby plant nursery gave students an insight into Indigenous plant propagation, as well as all of the accompanying equipment and elements required for them to grow such as compost, worms, and organic mulch. The school will utilise their Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Australia School Empowerment Grant to purchase more Indigenous plants to improve ground cover across all gardens, and potentially reinstate the frog pond to encourage biodiversity and achieve a range of water-protective measures at Ajuga.*



Left: clearing garden area, Centre: artwork in progress, Right: Ajuga School's Bush Tucker garden.

*Once the stock motion video has been submitted, Ajuga School will graduate at the end of this year as an official "Waterschool".*

### Case study 2 – Coreen School

*Coreen School is a School for Specific Purposes (SSP) based in Blacktown in New South Wales. After three years of participation in the Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Australia program, Coreen teachers and students have learned about how to capture rainwater, utilise it for growing food, and how native edible plants can reduce water requirements while still providing sustenance.*



*Above: Coreen School's 2021 peer-teaching workshop about how to collect rain water and use for the school garden watering system.*



Above: Coreen School Lead Teacher Julia and student in vegetable garden with terracotta olla installed to passively water fruits and vegetables.

*This year, students focused on native plants as a water-saving food supply, and ways to reduce water evaporation in the school kitchen garden. After building and creating an olla from terracotta pots, a special collaboration project was formed with the local Men's Shed to install a Cultural Garden at school. During the online teacher training session about Indigenous Plants in Term 2, Aboriginal community leader and educator Adam Bruggemann offered the services of his local Men's Shed to assist in clearing, preparing and planting a Cultural Garden for participating schools.*

*Coreen School utilised their Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Australia School Empowerment Grant to purchase equipment and plants for the garden, and the Men's Shed team received a Traditional Custodian engagement grant to recognise their time, effort and expertise. This grant helped to fund a local community planting day led by the Men's Shed (pictured below at Coreen School this September) in the nearby suburb of Miller, increasing indirect reach and impact of the program.*



*Over 120 Indigenous plants have now been planted at Coreen School, and students will continue to monitor the watering requirements comparative to the nearby common vegetable garden with the olla as we approach the more water-intensive Summer months in Australia. Additional photographs and videos can be viewed (internally) in the SFWS Australia Hub: [Coreen School](#)*



## Major Project Highlight

A major program highlight is the continued engagement of Indigenous experts, educators and knowledge holders across NSW. Building upon the time and effort invested in these relationships last year, several new relationships have emerged as well as a deepening of existing ones.

Key highlights include:

- Adam Bruggemann leading online teacher training session “Indigenous Plants”, and visiting schools in the SFWS Australia program to install Cultural Gardens with members of local Men’s Shed and community Elders.
- Uncle Jimmy Smith will lead an online session about Astrology in 2024, and has offered to host students on Country to learn more about the history of Kamay (Botany Bay).
- Aunty Kerrie Kenton will lead the Welcome to Country and Water Ceremony again this year at the 2023 Flagship Event, and has handed down this ceremonial knowledge to her niece so it is not lost from the Wangal clan (the keepers of the Water Ceremony).
- Uncle Shayne Williams sharing his thoughts about the strength of combining Western Science and Indigenous Science to overcome local water challenges (shared as part of the Water workshop during the Foundation Global Meeting in Wattens in June).

The new Program Manager is dedicated to fostering these relationships, and attended an art exhibition by Aunty Kerrie in September which was well received and the effort acknowledged in a post-exhibition email.

This concludes the Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Australia Quarterly Report for September, 2023.



**SWAROVSKI**  
WATERSCHOOL

The 2023 Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Australia Quarterly Report (September) has been prepared by Earthwatch Australia Education Program Manager, Hannah Gentle and reviewed by Earthwatch Australia Head of Education, Michelle Tripp. Social media posts and media coverage information created and collated by Earthwatch Australia Digital Marketing Assistant Monisha Alexander.