

INFLUENCING CHANGE THROUGH A LOW CARBON SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Research Question

What role does community play in a school's ability to decarbonise?

This research will track and evaluate the extent to which a new Low Carbon Schools Pilot Program (LCSP) can reduce schools' operating carbon emissions from energy, and whether the schools (through their initiatives) can influence community awareness, knowledge and action on climate change and decarbonisation.

Figure 1: Students in the school community garden at South Fremantle Senior High School in Fremantle, Western Australia.



Methodology

Using social network analysis (SNA), the research will analyse the amount and types of partnerships formed through the LCSP as well as the reach of knowledge around climate change and low carbon living with a variety of community stakeholders including local businesses, community groups, councils, parents and others connected to the school. The carbon associated with energy for participating schools will

be calculated and monitored using quantitative data analysis. Surveys will also be administered to various school stakeholders to capture qualitative and quantitative data about knowledge and action around low carbon living and the extent by which the stakeholders were influenced by the program.

Figure 2: Types of data to be collected from various school stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Data Collected
Participating schools & control group schools	Amount and types of low carbon initiatives previously and new initiatives implemented throughout the program.
Parents of students in participating schools	Knowledge level and if actions have been pursued in their homes as a result of the LCSP.
Residents in the geographical area of participating schools	Awareness of low carbon initiatives at school and if any measures have been implemented as a direct result from interaction with the school.
Low carbon committees at participating schools	Types of partnerships formed, experiences, and new initiatives implemented.
Community groups & volunteers involved	Involvement and if they have personally implemented any measures as a direct result from their interaction with the school.

Results

This research is commencing in November 2015.

Conclusions

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Anticipated impacts

The Low Carbon Schools Pilot Program seeks to reduce emissions from energy use from 30 participating schools by 20 per cent, as well as addressing other areas including water, waste, transport and food. This could result in a 769.4 tonne carbon savings (based on an estimated carbon emissions from electricity use of 128.24 tonnes CO₂-e per school). Public schools & hospitals account for up to 50 per cent of a government's energy spend (Government Property Group, 2011), representing a significant proportion of emissions. If the program is successful and expanded nationally, the LCSP has the potential to reduce emissions and costs considerably.

This research provides an opportunity to capture data around whether a new, innovative Low Carbon Schools Program can reduce carbon emissions and costs in schools and what role community partnerships play in the success of the decarbonisation process.

It will also help to inform local councils and government about the efficacy and

impact of carbon reduction programs. It is expected that the findings from this research can be applied to other sectors outside of schools.

Can low carbon initiatives in schools have a wider impact in the community around low carbon living knowledge & action?

Further information

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