



Reef Guardian School Profile

BOWEN STATE SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 2003

Location:

Situated in Bowen, North Queensland.

Size of School:

518 students.

Community:

Bowen has approximately 13,700 people including a significant Indigenous population. It is a seaside farming community with a significant vegetable (especially tomato) growing industry and its main employer is Agriculture. Bowen offers seasonal farming and fruit picking work for many Queensland residents and international tourists.



What's unique about Bowen State School?

Imagine studying the Reef from a rural, coastal school on the waters edge of the Great Barrier Reef, overlooking spectacular islands and gorgeous sandy beaches. This is what the students at Bowen State School are able to experience every day. Students at Bowen State School benefit from hands-on unique marine experiences, with the Great Barrier Reef on their doorstep.

Bowen State School as a Reef Guardian School

As part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Reef Guardian Schools program, Bowen State School teaches students about the importance of reef awareness, conservation, protection and best environmental practices. The school focuses on protecting all marine environments from pollution.

Curriculum

As part of the school curriculum, year 7 teachers have developed a unit of study called "Guardians of the Environment". The unit's major focus is on learning about and protecting marine environments and students participate in an excursion to Hardy's Reef with Fantasea Cruises as part of their studies.

Resource Management

Students at Bowen State School consider resource management an important part of protecting the Great Barrier Reef and students have developed activities to help reduce the school's impacts on the

marine environment. A group of students have designed an exciting program to encourage other students and teachers to help keep the school grounds free of litter. Each class has been assigned an area of the school to keep clean. At the end of each week the areas are judged and the class that has kept their area the cleanest receives the perpetual trophy. Students have also implemented incentives like stamps and “Clean One” vouchers to encourage all students to do the right thing by putting rubbish in the bin and leaving the school grounds and drains tidy and free of litter.

The school grounds have been fully fenced and gardens, trees and shrubs have been planted along the school boundary to prevent litter from being blown into surrounding gutters and drains. The trees and shrubs also help maintain water on the school grounds.

An aquaculture centre with six ponds has been set up at the school, where students help breed barramundi and red claw. James Cook University experts provided advice to students on the appropriate set up of the ponds and a donation from local business, Bartec Pools and Pumps, was given to the school to establish and maintain the centre. Students look after the centre by participating in regular cleaning and feeding duties.

Community Resources

Bowen State School’s primary Reef Guardian activity is the Adopt-A-Beach Program. It incorporates students, teachers and the community to protect and preserve Bowen’s beautiful local beaches. As part of the program, students:

- Collect rubbish from the two Adopt-A-Beaches, Kings Beach and Rose Bay, using tools made at school;
- Take cuttings of dune plants and grow them at school. Once established, students replant them on the beaches’ dunes that need stabilisation;
- Provide bins for cigarette butts near the beach and monitor how many are used;
- Work closely with the local council and report findings to them;
- Make suggestions to the local council and government agencies, ie. signs at the local boat ramps stating “Stow It Don’t Throw It”;
- Stencilling nearby drains with the message “this drain is just for rain”; and
- Report findings, tips and updates about these local beaches to the community through local radio, the local newspaper and the school newsletter.

Community Education

As part of the Adopt-A-Beach program, students focus on educating the community and visitors to Bowen about best environmental practices, beach protection and the importance of protecting the Great Barrier Reef. Students have designed an information brochure for accommodation venues in Bowen to educate tourists about keeping Bowen’s beaches beautiful by using butt bins and disposing of rubbish when fishing. Students have also designed a website to inform the community about their activities, findings, achievements, reports and upcoming events.

