

WORKING OUTSIDE THE SQUARE WITHIN:

**A HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION CENTRES WITHIN THE
NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

(1970-2017)

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

Anne Marie Ross

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ABSTRACT

Environmental education began in the late 1960s to early 1970s. At the same time, the NSW Department of Education started establishing field studies centres, later known as environmental education centres. They started developing and disseminating environmental education. Evolving from nature study and conservation education, environmental education crucially encompasses an action component of being “for” the environment as well as “about” and “in” the environment. The environmental education centres have embodied and encompassed that evolution. Antithetical to traditional forms of formal education, environmental education incorporates an intrinsically holistic, socio-political character. Centre environmental educators are unique professionals within the state education workforce who provide both a relevant connection between land, water and pedagogy, and essential support for educating for sustainability. Within this context, there are lessons to be learnt about the vagaries of the state political system and how environmental education centre personnel implemented change within that system. Over the last 20 or so years, many key environmental educators from within the NSW environmental education centre system have retired. Many of these people were very experienced within the environmental education centre network and were instrumental in progressing the development of environmental education/education for sustainability and the work of the centres within NSW. With history informing how things play out in the present day, it seems an important time to study the history of environmental education in NSW. This historical analysis narrates the establishment and development of these centres, and environmental education/education for sustainability, through the phenomenon of the 1970s growth in socially conscious governance, to the public managerialism of the 1980s and 1990s, into the tightening tentacles of neoliberalism. With an action-oriented ethos, the centres have made a significant contribution to shifting the agenda toward a more sustainable future, connected to our environment relative to a world heavily influenced by our consumeristic society.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AAEE	Australian Association for Environmental Education
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AEE (NSW)	Association for Environmental Education
ASEA	Australian Education for Sustainability Alliance
AuSSI	Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative
ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CSIRO	Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation
EE	Environmental Education
EEC	Environmental Education Centre
EfS	Education for Sustainability
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EZEC	Environmental and Zoo Education Centre Network
FPP	Fauna Protection Panel
FSC	Field Studies Centre
KLA	Key Learning Area
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
NCAS	National Conservation Strategy Australia
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
NSW	New South Wales
NSW EPA	NSW Environmental Protection Authority
QLD	Queensland
SS NSW	Sustainable Schools NSW
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States