

Penelope Passmore Teaching Principal welcomed us to her school.

The context at Waterfall Public School is like no other. The school is the centre of community with only other services in the suburb are the railway station, Rural Fire Service, tennis court plus fish and chip shop.

Built in 1902, original weatherboard building is now Principal's office plus the old weather shed. On the former site of Heathcote Hotel which burnt down. Vegetable school for Garrawarra T.B. hospital remnant from then is a mulberry tree. Site is leased from NPWS. Highest 66 enrolment after WW2, in recent years had 57 enrolments, currently there are 18 students.

### Nature Inspired Learning Environment – Environmental Regeneration project

Successful with application for NSW Environmental Trust Grant environmental regeneration \$3500 grant. Plan is to build an outside Nature Inspired Learning Environment – NILE. Focus on part of playground paved with silver seats, over rock. Put in grant application, removed pavers and silver seats, use natural water runoff from COLA with downpipe that runs down the hill. Plan to develop a dry creek bed, regenerate with local grasses, tree stumps to site on.

Students involved in designs. It will be dedicated to local community member passed away earlier this year and who had been an important part of the school. His totem was gumleaf. Currently 25% of school is Indigenous and some students can speak in language.

Over time school community have tried to level out and cover up the area. Going back to how it was. Watched water flow during recent rain. Kids pulled up pavers, need to build walls using pavers to make banks. Sand that had been under the pavers eroded after recent heavy rain, with outflow from COLA has marked out a creek bed line. Studied soil erosion and structure in Term 1, Weather in Term 2.

Kid's plans included creek in same location of all, somewhere to sit, somewhere to play. Most incorporated design of gumleaf. Valued as a memorial to significant Indigenous community member. Asking for donations of native tree stumps and rocks from community. Add to over time. Environmental trust NSW Eco School grants program, finished stage 1 by end of October. Photograph as progress through program.

Repurposed pavers, students initiated and moved and paved are tin front of the GA shed.



Student designs for NILE space

Other Waterfall PS initiatives

Curriculum rich learning opportunities in wide range of outdoor learning. Authentic learning. Friday afternoon weed crew and Principal have targeted agapanthus, worked in vege patch or prepared garden. Differentiated learning small schools organically do it. Designed and built own bee hotels, distributed around the school. Sydney Stingless bees came.

Kids designed community library. Sandpit doubles as an extra table. Outdoor furniture made from recycled plastic. Bird Olympics and feather identification. No dig garden. Bin drums.

Other sources of grants tapped into: Green grant \$1500 Woolies supporting vege garden. Eaten produce from vege garden when it is ready, just eaten snow peas in stir fry and planted tomatoes early. Live Life Well fitness, sun safety and planning to build pagoda deciduous vine. Other grants available include Teachers Mutual Bank, IMB grant and NSW Teachers Federation Tree Levy.

Heathcote HS current school captain came from Waterfall, also many ex-students in the SRC. All get jobs, from Kindy running assembly. Wi-Fi into bush. Use of technology multi-platform. Getting community driven canteen. Kids build paving to GA shed, repurposing the pavers. Bush swing just placed by RFS off a tall gum tree planted by ex-student in 1960s. Winter lunch time, Ninja Warriors. Can play with sticks if they don't run with them or use them as a weapon. Give safe boundaries. Carry sticks at big schools can designate days and grades, use to build cubbies during peer support.

Pasi Sahlberg <https://pasisahlberg.com/>

RNPEEC nature play – using sticks safely. If stick longer than hip drag. Drag from bigger end at the front. If longer than you, get a second person to help drag. Give guidelines and teach how to do it safely. See [20 ways to play with sticks](#) and [Playing with sticks](#)



Mud Kitchen, made from repurposed pallets.....

Engadine Public School. Bunnings helped out twice this year. Indigenous garden going to be built from funds raised from recent school fete. Sydney Wildflower garden course Indigenous workshop in couple of weeks. Small schools should be encouraged to apply for grants. Such as Tradies Community Grant. [Mining under Woronora dam Sutherland Shire Environment Centre SSEC petition](#)