

every stitch counts: save the reef

GSL COMPETITION 2019/2020

ST MARGARET'S AND BERWICK GRAMMAR SCHOOL, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA
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SUPERVISOR: MS ANNETTE ROME, PRINCIPAL



SDG 14: The Great Barrier Reef is the biggest coral reef system in the world, situated off Queensland, Australia. In the previous decades, climate change has threatened the Great Barrier Reef, due to **rising sea water temperature and ocean acidity.**

Rising sea water is causing a phenomenon known as bleaching. Bleaching is caused when the algae that give coral colour, known as zooxanthellae, begin to die when the surrounding water temperature becomes too warm. Zooxanthellae are also the coral's energy source, so without them, coral will become very weak, even when it recovers.

Increased ocean acidity is led by the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gasses readily dissolve into water, creating unwanted levels of acid that weaken the exoskeletons of organisms in the GBR. One example is carbonic acid, the product of carbon dioxide and water which corrodes calcium carbonate, the substance that shells and exoskeletons are made of. When the calcium carbonate and carbonic acid react, they cause a chemical reaction that weakens the shells and are no longer effective in protecting the organism.

SDG 4: We believe that education is the key to achieving anything. When we are accurately informed, we can bring about positive change to society. As recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26, education is a right, not a privilege and it is something everyone deserves. Our project aims to bring education and awareness of the damaging effects of climate change on our Great Barrier Reef through our exhibition. Through informative posters, we hope people are informed about the Great Barrier Reef and are inspired to take action and fight against the climate crisis.

SDG 3, 17: Our project involves the collaborative effort of students, teachers, parents and community members such as the elderly. Interactions of older people with younger people are shown to have benefit for wellbeing on older people, proven in research conducted by several reputable institutions, such as Stanford. The collaboration of faculties including science, art, council and the broader community will create strong community connections that unify us.

SPECIFIC

The aim of this project is to raise awareness of the damaging effect that climate change has on the Great Barrier Reef. We intend on encouraging the interactions between older and younger generations, including students, teachers and community members. Crafting sessions occur weekly, with the final product exhibited at Bunjil Place. Climate scientists will be invited to share their expertise in this field of knowledge.

MEASURABLE

Our project has 2 phases: the first phase is the art installation, the second phase is the social awareness project. Our exhibition is scheduled to open on the 16th April to 10th of June. This period of time will mark the accomplishment of the first phase and we will take feedback and suggestions from the public during this time.

ACHIEVABLE

We will accomplish this goal by delegating tasks and engaging community members. There are a lot of organisation and logistics involved in this project so it is important to make sure everyone is on the same page. It is also important for us to keep on schedule, considering we have a very short time frame.

RELEVANT

Our project is relevant to the current status of the world. Climate action has become a huge progressive movement and we hope to contribute to it through our project. Our project aims to highlight the looming threat and remind people to do their part to save the Earth. This project is very applicable to anyone. The only prerequisite for this project is to be passionate about making a positive mark on our Earth and the community.

TIME-BOUND

We are tackling our project by breaking it down into sections; such as setting up the main forms of communication then creating the art installation. This section involves lots of time and effort and is an ongoing section that will continue as we hope to make it a growing exhibition for community members to join throughout.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



101
MEMBERS DIRECTLY
IMPACTED



226 HOURS

ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED:

St Margaret's School: Junior & Senior
Berwick Grammar School: Senior
Bunjil Place, Narre Warren, VIC AUS
GHD Engineering Australia
Melville Grange Aged Care, Australia
Phillip Island Country Women's Association, Australia



WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

Through this project, we have been able to further develop our understanding of the importance of community and communication. The art installation is only made possible through the generous contribution of community members who have given up their time to knit or crochet. Activist art is a very effective way to communicate ideas as it is very accessible to all people and utilises creative storytelling to project a message. The colourful coral represent the thriving Great Barrier Reef and the white coral are a startling reminder of what the reef would look like if we do not consider our environmental impact on the Earth.

As this project involves many stakeholders, we have learnt to communicate effectively and regularly to ensure streamlining of the project, through assigning liasons. We have also set up a social media campaign (@every.stitch.counts) to expand our project outreach and engage global community members.

We have also learnt the importance of leadership, taking initiative and finding opportunities rather than waiting for them. to the best of our ability, we reached out to organisations who we believe could help us or find ways to increase community engagement and reach. Because of this, we were able to find a public exhibition space and spread our message through the GSL podcast.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Xingtong: As the group leader, being fully immersed in this project has given me a new perspective on what it means to create positive change in a community. I am able to see the real time effect that my actions have had on others and it has made this experience very fulfilling and meaningful. Climate change is a looming issue that our generation must face and this has been an unique and great opportunity to raise awareness about it. This project has given me this opportunity and I am very thankful for this amazing experience.

Mehr: Experience in many social service activities could never compare to what I have experienced with this project. Upon starting this project, I didn't know how something so simple yet creative could allow us in making sense of a bigger issue. I am in awe of the great work such a small community can create in such a short period of time, proving that whatever we put our mind to, we can achieve.

Trent: The environment is an aspect which we should all care in and an area that I have had a passion for since a young age. Through joining this project, it has allowed me to contribute and support a project far greater than my schools' community. It has allowed me to express who I am as a person, to utilise my love of technology, public speaking and leadership while most importantly, take action towards climate change. I have enjoyed every moment of this project and working with Xingtong and Mehr.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLICATIONS

Instagram (@every.stitch.counts)

Global Social Leaders Podcast and Blog

City of Casey Publication, "Creatively Confined"

Facebook (St Margaret's and Berwick Grammar School)



IMPACT ON COMMUNITY

Every Stitch Counts has been a fascinating experience that has brought people of all different ages together. Not only have older people taught younger people knitting and crochet skills but all have come together to support each other socially and emotionally. I believe linking the local community together has been fantastic, all whilst adjusting to these new circumstances. All in all, everyone is joined through the thread of this wonderful project.

- Ms Annette Rome, Principal

Participating in Every Stitch Counts: Save The Reef created a real sense of community within the group as we shared a common goal of wanting to protect marine ecosystems. It's been an enriching and fulfilling experience that I am extremely grateful to have been a part of.

- Alisa Johnson, Student

Taking part in this project has been a wonderful way for me, as a new staff member, to meet students from many year levels and staff from different faculties. Our lunchtime meetings were a lovely, informal environment to chat, craft and even talk about the mathematics of crocheting hyperbolic planes!

- Ms Melissa MacEoin, Teacher

An organisation we worked closely with is Bunjil Place. Bunjil Place is the hub for arts and entertainment for Melbourne's South East region, so it was fitting to work with them to exhibit our art installation. Our exhibition was scheduled to open from the 16th of April to 10th of June, however due to COVID-19, Bunjil Place closed, however we will still go ahead with the exhibition once we return back to school. Our project has positively impacted knitters and crocheters and we hope to expand this with our future exhibition which will allow our project to have a larger, more significant public outreach. As part of their curriculum, Junior School students have been able to research and create posters for our exhibition, allowing them to learn about the invasive and endangered species of the Great Barrier Reef. The purpose of these posters is to educate the community and inspire them to take action.

To increase our awareness campaign, we have used social media, as it is a very effective way of communicating information. Our posts include examples of knitted or crocheted projects, informative posts about the Great Barrier Reef and the impact of climate change on our environment. The impact of our social media campaign has proved to be very effective, with our posts reaching an average of 220 people per post with 60% of them being non-followers.

Due to the COVID-19 situation, we have not been able to achieve as much as we planned for, including the exhibition and collaboration with scientists. However, this has taught us to be flexible and adaptable. The public engagement from contributors was a main objective that we achieved. It is also very meaningful to see the intergenerational relationships that are being formed through this project. We hope after restrictions are lessened, we will be able to exhibit an installation the community is proud of and spread our awareness campaign with the guidance of marine scientists.

