

Exciting Environmental Initiatives

There have been many Woodleigh initiatives over the years related to the environment & sustainability has emerged as a pressing and major priority. In recent years 'they have lifted the bar'.

In 2005 a Director of Sustainability was appointed and Staff and Student committees have been working on

environmental priorities (especially with respect to recycling and reducing the 'environmental footprint').

Last year construction commenced on an 'Environmental Sustainability Centre', with hands-on involvement of students, and the aim to release a five year 'Sustainability Master Plan'.

Sustainability Centre is Born at Woodleigh

Work has begun on Woodleigh's Sustainability Centre. Located in the upper reaches of our site, this development is surrounded by the gardens, vineyard, orchard and animals of the school.

This project has had a rather long history, having begun around four years ago, at a time when the AgHort department was looking for an innovative solution to their need for a classroom. Development of the project was centred on a committee of students who were (and are) interested in a responsible approach to the environment.

These students were able to work with a 4th Year RMIT building degree group in a "studio" that dealt with finding a sustainable, and affordable, building type. Along the way the school has sought inspiration from many individuals who have shared our enthusiasm for the construction of a building that requires low energy input, uses materials that need little energy to produce, does not have a strong negative impact on the environment, and is comfortable and functional.

Educating a wide group of people about sustainable solutions was an early objective of the project and so the building has evolved over the years to become a working example of high and low tech possibilities.

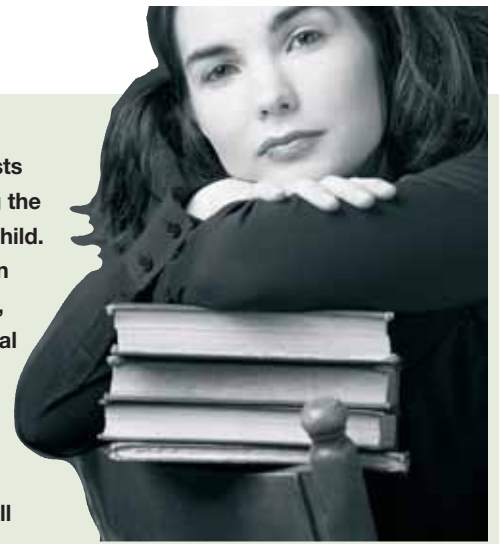
The material of choice for this project has been straw bale, with its excellent thermal properties, it is able to be grown quickly, is available locally, can withstand fires and most importantly, can be constructed with relative ease and little experience. Two walls have been built to test the material in action and this process has been judged a success. The straw bale is used on two walls and the remaining structure is now constructed using a variety of processes including radial cut timbers, straw board, inverse brick veneer with hebel blocks and assorted insulations.

As this article is written, we have the poles that will support the roof in place and are about to render our latest test wall with its final coat. There is constant work being done on the area by students who document the own safety audits for each stage. Their work has been acknowledged by the Order of Australia Association and we are working with the Frankston City Council and other schools to allow those involved in the project to pass on their knowledge to our broader community.

We will continue working towards the development of this leading edge centre through the school's curriculum.

- Mark Friedlander Environment Centre Workshop Teacher
Excerpt from *Namalata*, Semester One, 2007

Many educationalists believe in choosing the school to suit the child. If a child exhibits an academic, creative, sporting or technical bent a parent must research schools that provide and nurture these abilities - Ginger Hill



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For more information about the Primary Years Program at Toorak College contact our Registrar, Ms Donna Galloway on 9788 7234 or donnag@toorak.vic.edu.au



Old Morningside Road, Mount Eliza. www.toorak.vic.edu.au

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