TORRENSVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL’S SUSTAINABILITY SUPERHEROES
Torrens Primary School is a Foundation to Year 7 public school, located in the Western suburbs near the Torrens River. We have developed a shared vision, understandings and practices to build a more sustainable community.

**Vision**
The vision is to actively engage students, staff and the community in developing a sustainable environment; to inspire best practice and emphasise the importance of empowering individuals to become responsible in contributing to a sustainable future.

**Sustainability initiatives**
Torrens Primary School’s sustainability journey to become a ‘sustainable site’ began in 2016 by reducing our waste into landfill. KESAB WOW (Wipe Out Waste) Group visited the school and conducted a waste audit; this revealed the school was sending far too much waste to landfill.

We registered with the AuSSI-SA (Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative-South Australia) which has a partnership between the Department for Education and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM (Natural Resources Management) Boards. As an AuSSI-SA participant we have ongoing help from an NRM Education facilitator who has assisted us to plan and manage sustainability initiatives, develop a site environment management plan and access grants.

The Sustainability Committee (consisting of staff, OSHC rep and parents), Sustainability Super Heroes and WOW student groups has been instrumental in developing the school’s capacity to become more sustainable by

- Implementing paper and cardboard recycling bins in all classes, to reduce the cost of landfill
- Improved bin infrastructure and labelling for better waste separation eg recycling, 10c, food scraps. Students designed labels and graphics developed by a staff member
- Using ‘Kitchen caddies’ to collect food scraps in all classrooms, OSHC, the Breakfast program and staffroom
- 10c recycling and plastic recycling
- Developing a school sustainability logo
- Setting up a worm farm and compost tumblers to save organic material from landfill
- ‘Nude food’ initiatives promoting waste free lunches to reduce the amount of plastic packaging coming to school
- Establishing a kitchen garden irrigated via automatic watering systems from our water tanks
- Extra outdoor seating to encourage staff and students to use the school grounds for lessons and break times
- Monday Garden Care group at student lunch break
- Eating times after playtime; resulting in a large reduction of rubbish and correct waste sorting
• Assemblies and newsletters modelling solutions to practical and everyday ways of implementing sustainability
• Mini Bin Challenge (starting again soon) with the aim to fill a bin only once a day – or ultimately once a week
• Office recycling collection for ink cartridges, paper and used batteries. All shredded paper from office/library is used for compost tumbler bins
• Staff room waste to separate hard/soft plastics, cardboard, paper and food scraps
• WOW (student group) award presented at assembly for classes who are trying to be sustainable. The best class receives a special ‘Bin award’ certificate and 10 minutes extra playtime
• Bin recycling systems used for functions like the Quiz Night and Sports Day
• Making and promoting Produce bags to reduce single-use plastic bags.

We have ‘sustainability superheroes’ (Foundation – year 2 students) who fly around the yard at playtimes helping everyone to recycle right. Our school yard is super tidy!

Grants/Connecting with community
The school has received ongoing support from several organisations in its sustainability journey. These include NRM, Bunnings Warehouse, Landcare, West Torrens Council, Seaton Christian Family Centre ‘One in Ten’ group, Western Communities Church of Christ, Governing Council and Parents & Friends fundraising.

Garden areas have been continually improved by students planting on National Tree Day with plants donated by the city of West Torrens and Bunnings Warehouse.

Curriculum and Learning
Teachers actively incorporate sustainability topics into their teaching, guided by the Australian Curriculum, Early Years Learning Framework and the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) framework.

Continued next page
Sustainability themes have been embedded into our inquiry units across all year levels. For example a unit of work looked at ‘Coastal environments and the impact of plastics’ and ‘How to look after the River Torrens’. The Primary years classes have been involved in a unit of work that incorporates sustainability and resource management, this has been supported by the City Of West Torrens Waste Education Officer.

Early years incorporated STEM learning and sustainability by using the design brief Waste not, Want not. Students constructed show rides, ticket booths and food stalls from pre-loved materials. They implemented a combination of alternative power sources. Food stall ovens were heated from wood from the wood chopping event. The ‘gravity drop’ ride was powered by rainwater storage towers, as it always rains on show week! A solar battery recharge station was also used to power night lighting.

Middle years themes have been Is water more precious than gold? and The future Is now- Globalisation. This year we were involved in the SALA Festival using the theme ‘Natural Environment/ Sustainability’.

**Future challenges**
- Developing a series of nature play spaces with students aiding the design
- School involvement in OBBY (Our Big Back Yard) West Torrens Project
- Further develop our Indigenous garden by adding a Yarning circle.

**Results and benefits**
In November 2017 we showcased our achievements at the KESAB Sustainable Communities Awards and Expo. We received an award for ‘Greatest reductions in materials to landfill for a primary school site’. The school has monitored and recorded an ongoing reduction of waste going to landfill.

The school’s sustainability agenda has grown beyond our sustainability groups into one shared by the whole school community, incorporating these practices with families at home. Students have gained an understanding of sustainability issues and take pride in their positive environmental impact and sense of achievement.

The Torrensville Primary School community has nurtured ownership of sustainability initiatives. Students are taught that the small things they do together can make a big difference to the world.

**SILVIA MCMULLEN, DEPUTY PRINCIPAL AND SUE CAREY, EARLY YEARS TEACHER**
TORRENSVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL