



Young people thinking big about sustainability

Recently I had the privilege of attending the Youth Forum on Sustainability in Bayside. It was the first of its kind in Victoria, and engaged more than 70 local primary school students and teachers on the topic of sustainability. Students were challenged to think big and design a model green learning centre using only recycled materials and their imaginations.

The forum, funded by Bayside City Council, was initiated by the Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network (BKG LLEN) and Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability. Jane Stewart, one of the co-founders of Tomorrow's Leaders of Sustainability put it best when she said...

"The aim of the forum is to assist young people in understanding sustainability, whilst participating in fun and challenging activities that foster leadership skills."

During the Forum, students heard from Bayside Mayor, Councillor Alex del Porto who spoke about the

importance of sustainability, and a variety of other guest speakers. They learned about current sustainability practices in energy, water, construction, recycling and gardens. This knowledge was then put to the test when students worked in groups to build their vision of a 'Green Learning Centre'.



Throughout the event, the one thing that really struck me was the ability of students to come up with amazing new ways to create a sustainable building. Ideas included buildings that rotated according to the position of the sun, lunar powered (as opposed to solar powered) panels, gardens that were both a classroom and a place to grow food.

It is amazing what can happen when a child's imagination is given space to be expressive.

I couldn't help but reflect how as adults we all too often dismiss ideas (both our own and those of others), out of a sense of being 'realistic'. In doing so we may be preventing ideas from growing from possibility into probability.

Overall, the event was a wonderful success. Many students and teachers asked to see it repeated, not only in Bayside, but in schools across Melbourne.

Thomas Walsh
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LEFT
Forum Group
ABOVE LEFT
Completed 3D Model
ABOVE
Building the 3D Model