Around the Schools

Schools to develop water quality unit in curriculum

Mission Beach State School recently held a workshop for the development of a water quality curriculum program for the Tully Clever Cluster Coalition of Primary State Schools with assistance from Tully State High.

Acting Deputy Principal Darrin Timms said one representative from each of the eight state primary schools and three teachers from the high school's science department attended the one-day workshop.

"The day allowed the teachers to develop a comprehensive and cohesive approach to the development of a water quality unit which will be implemented in all the state schools from Cardwell to El Arish," Mr Timms said.

"As part of this cluster approach, the primary schools will be working closely with the high school to share resources and expertise in the field of water quality testing.

"Mrs Kylie Azzopardi, the Tully State High School's laboratory manager, is a past employer of Cairns Water and her expertise and guidance has been well appreciated in the development of this unit for the cluster schools. Many government and affiliated bodies are eager to join this program including James Cook University, Reef Guardian and Terrain Natural Resource Management.

"As far as we are aware, this will be a unique project and the level of co-operation between the high school and the eight primary cluster schools is unique in Queensland.

"The high school has provided time, energy, expertise and the use of expensive resources to improve the collaboration between the high school and the primary schools in the field of science education.

"The teachers who attended the workshop documented the following ideal outcomes in a Water Quality unit: Indigenous perspectives; comparison of lagoons and filter beds (to measure and compare their efficiency); improve water quality; make some assumptions about the impact on the reef; creation of a database and long term data analysis; create links with local industry; look at the whole of the catchment; make assumptions on the impacts of water quality on the fisheries; comparison of data across the cluster; identify hotspots; have a cluster water quality discussion forum including the cluster schools to decide on some management plans for the wider catchment; impact on the planning and action decisions on the school environmental groups; provide a consistent approach to water quality across a cluster spanning a geographical distance of 50 kilometres; provide a unit of which every cluster school participates to provide a model of rich science curriculum.

"There are two units, one for Year 5 and one for Year 7 and both of these complement the units currently in place in Year 9, Year 11 Science 21 and Year 12 Biology.

"The Year 5 unit will entail the sampling of 'bugs' from the creek and the identification of these organisms to make assumptions of the creek's water quality and the Year 7 unit will expand to incorporate some chemical testing with the assistance of the high school.

"With focussed support from the high school, each other and some industry bodies, we can make this a very successful unit which will assist a seamless transition from primary to high school in terms of curriculum development and implementation in science."

UNDER THE SURFACE: Mission Beach State School students Chaim Sanders and Luke Fitzgerald tested out the local waterway to check water quality.