

# Enviroschools Ōtākou

Enviroschools

Whiringa-ā-rangi  
November 2025

Nau mai, haere mai

## Kā mihi to Ōtākou Enviroschools

Every year, Enviroschools across our region share their journey, learning and achievements with our facilitation team in annual reviews. These reviews are often conversations about the activities that have been happening across the school that highlight just how many Enviroschools actions are happening on a daily basis.

We're so grateful for your creativity and commitment to caring for our people and our planet. From thriving gardens and waste-wise initiatives to student-led sustainability projects, it's inspiring to see how each school brings the Enviroschools kaupapa to life in your own unique way.

Your mahi makes a real difference — not just in your schools, but across our wider community. Keep sharing your stories, celebrating your successes, and supporting each other on this journey toward a more sustainable future.



*An ākoka from Dunedin holds up a massive weed she pulled out while at the Dunedin Enviroschools hui.*



*Clutha Enviroschools Facilitator, Scott, walks through the stream health assessment with the two Tokomairiro High ākoka.*

## Education for Sustainability at Tokomairiro High

Salmond's Creek was tested by Tokomairiro High School learners for their Education for Sustainability achievement standard. The Education for Sustainability achievement standard involves evaluating measures that may be taken to sustain and/or improve a biophysical environment. With Salmond's Creek in their backyard, two Tokomairiro ākoka decided to critically evaluate measures that could be undertaken to improve the stream health of this creek.

With the sun shining down on them, our Clutha Facilitator, Scott, and the two ākoka tested several different areas of the creek and they noted that the area with the restored native vegetation yielded the best results. The creek had actually had a stream health assessment done by Year 11 Geography ākoka in 2024 and this year's ākoka noticed similar trends from last year.

The Ministry of Education says, "Humanity has never faced such significant and urgent challenges as those we face today. Education for Sustainability explores the ways we can address unsustainable practices through empowering, optimistic, and values-based action".

Enviroschools



TOIMATA  
FOUNDATION

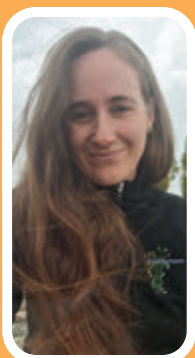


## KIA ORA KOUTOU

Kā mihi mahana ki a koutou.

It's time for Annual Reviews! Annual Reviews are opportunities for reflection and planning, where we see all that we've done, what we can build on and what opportunities exist to build on for next year. Annual Reviews are also important as an overview of what is important to Ōtākou Enviroschools, so we can see opportunities and gaps as a region, and work together for shared outcomes that benefit our communities.

It has been an absolute pleasure seeing all the hard work ākoka have been giving to schools sustainability journeys this year! We wish you all the best in your planning for 2026 and look forward to all the actions that come from that planning!



**Leisa de Klerk**  
Enviroschools  
Regional  
Coordinator  
Lead



**Lexie Davidson**  
Enviroschools  
Regional  
Coordinator  
Central

## Upcoming dates for Ōtākou Enviroschools

### CENTRAL OTAGO/QUEENSTOWN LAKES

1st December - Central Otago Primary Hui Year 5-8

9th December - Wānaka Primary Hui Year 1-6

### DUNEDIN

28th November - Dunedin Hui Year 7-10



*The Web of Life is a popular Enviroschools activity that showcases how connected we are as humans, as well as how connected our ecosystems are.*

## Shotover School's Beeswax Wraps

Plastic Free July has brought a hive of activity for the Year 5 and 6's at Shotover School, who started their week of learning with a session on where their waste goes in Queenstown and considering ways to reduce their single use packaging.

With a camp on the horizon for Term 3, 180 students had a waste free lunch session with Queenstown Facilitator, Nicky, and all came away with their very own beeswax wrap. The ākoka plan to use their beeswax wraps daily in their lunchboxes and bring them on their school camp to reduce the amount of plastic waste that they create.



*Shotover School ākoka proudly show off their new beeswax wraps.*

A sustainability journey is about creating long-term change and Shotover School are taking this seriously as they will be gathering the waste created on their school camp. When they're back at school, ākoka will be sorting through their waste and identifying changes that can be made for future camps to further reduce their waste.



## Alexandra Primary School visit the Orkney Wetland in Omakau

In September, a group of enthusiastic year 2-3 ākoka from Alexandra Primary School and a lot of keen parents, met at the Orkney Wetland for a morning of learning. Our Enviroschools Facilitator, Lucy, was joined by ORC Catchment Advisors and local experts to deliver four activities on macroinvertebrates, water clarity, trapping, bird identification and planting.

Strong winds, uneven ground, and a sudden down pour wasn't enough to dampen the spirit of this group. They continued to ask thoughtful questions and understand this new part of their local landscape.

Learning for Sustainability is about being a part of the natural environment and learning with, in and from nature. Experiences like this help ākoka to learn about the positive actions communities take to support natural cycles and flows.



Central Otago Facilitator, Lucy Francke, talks about water clarity with APS ākoka.



Alexandra Primary ākoka search for macroinvertebrates.

## Otago Girls Ākoka Practice Tea Jousting

Ākoka from the Otago Girls' High School Outdoor Education class held a tea party using native plants that they harvested and made the tea themselves by steeping it. Inspired by an activity Kaiako Michelle did at the Enviroschools Teacher Hui this year, ākoka were able to see which biscuits held up best with which tea they made!

Learning about the mātauranga of the native plants, they made tea using Kawakawa, Horopito, Manuka and Tarata tea and found Kawakawa was the best hit, though Horopito did give a great sensation as well! Using Michelle's grandparents' tea set was a beautiful way to blend two cultures.

Sustainable Communities through Kai weaves the kaupapa and five Guiding Principles of Enviroschools together and connects strongly with the theme areas, particularly Living Landscapes. It looks at strengthening connections with the land that nurtures us, and the people that collectively contribute to food supply and security. By connecting communities through kai, our living landscapes can meet our physical and social needs, and enhance our resilience, self-reliance and health.

## Ōtākou in Murihiku

Regional Coordinators from Ōtākou and Murihiku | Southland, Leisa and Josh, came together to support senior secondary ākoka from James Hargest in Murihiku, where they connected with te taiao, dove deep into the Enviroschools kaupapa and explored what environmental leadership looks like. The two days were full of sunshine, fresh snow and wet weather but lots of smiles and energy!

Drawing on the Guiding Principles Empowered Learners, Te Ao Māori and Learning for Sustainability, the two days inspired the twelve ākoka to think deeply about their place in the world.



Ākoka from James Hargest celebrate at the end of 2 days exploring.



Otago Girls ākoka look to see who will be the last one standing while tea and biscuit jousting with tea they made themselves.



## Schools in Action

Ākoka are often out and about in our communities making a difference and learning more about their local awa and whenua. Here's a snapshot of what some of our local schools have been up to.



*St Joseph's ākoka in Oamaru get busy with a beach clean up and even figured out what could have been recycled.*



*Year 7 and 8 ākoka from Rosebank School had the opportunity to contribute to the stream health at Frasers Stream by planting, exploring for tūnā and learning about healthy streams.*



*Te Kura O Take Kārara ākoka explore the Albert Town Lagoon during their Education Outside The Classroom doing bird watching, scavenger hunting and understanding eDNA water testing.*

## Ōtepoti Primary Year 4-6 Hui



What an inspiring day of learning at the Enviroschools Primary Hui in Ōtepoti Dunedin! Held in the breathtaking Ōrokonui Ecosanctuary, this hui brought together passionate Year 4-6 ākoka from across the city to connect, learn, and lead positive change for our environment. When these ākoka head back to school, they'll share their learnings with their peers and inspire more ākoka to take action.

From drawing their surroundings, native bird encounters to jumping for penguin habitats and powerful kōrero about sustainability, these ākoka showed us all what it means to care deeply for Papatūānuku. A massive mihi to the Ōrokonui Ecosanctuary team, Ōtepoti Enviroschools facilitators, educators, volunteers, kaiako and especially the tamariki who brought their energy, creativity, and hope to the day. The future is in great hands!



*Ākoka from Waitahuna School enjoy a bit of lunch in between activities during the Ōtepoti Primary Hui at Ōrokonui Ecosanctuary.*

## Waitaki Boys Ākoka get Planting



The Envirogroup from Waitaki Boys' High School were out again last week lending their energy and teamwork to the Waianakarua River planting project – and what an effort it was! They were lucky with the weather: a calm first hour let them get stuck in before the wind picked up, and they kept on going until 1pm.

On the south side of the Waianakarua River, the boys planted a big line of *Olearia Lineata* – a fast-growing shelter belt – while also caring for previous plantings by weeding, releasing, and adding new protectors. The rest of the site was backfilled with cabbage trees and more.

The boys were an absolute credit to their school – digging, planting, and watering together with enthusiasm. Special thanks to their Enviroschools teacher, Sam Henahan, who has been bringing students to help the Herbert Heritage Group plant and care for the river mouth for the past eight years.



*Waitaki Boys ākoka have another awesome planting day at Waianakarua River.*



## Matakauri Wetland Planting Day



Restoring the Matakauri Wetland so that it is "a thriving source of life and learning for the community" is part of the vision for this project that Queenstown Primary School are leading alongside Whakatipu Reforestation Trust, Whakatipu Wildlife Trust in collaboration with Queenstown Lakes District Council and Otago Regional Council.

There was no shortage of workers last week as a group of 80 Year 5/6 ākoka arrived fuelled and ready for some hard mahi. With support from Whakatipu Reforestation Trust and Yvette from Queenstown Lakes District Council, the students dug, planted and protected the new natives along the waterside to help increase the biodiversity of the wetland.

With this being the first of many days at the Wetland, the scope for community connections and educational opportunities are endless - this is Sustainable Communities in action.



Ākoka from Queenstown Primary School put together a pest trap, which it is hoped will keep the Wetland pest free and away from the new native plantings.

## Ōtākou Facilitators Plan & Connect

Our facilitators across the region are busy people, but once a term we set aside some time kanohi ki te kanohi to connect, learn, experience and plan ahead for our busy actions as a region. The facilitators are brimming with news about what is happening with their Enviroschools, so it's a great way to share what's working well and how we can work together for shared outcomes.

A special thanks this trip to Trish from the Waitaki Resource Recovery park in Oamaru for sharing all the amazing things that they are doing!



The Ōtākou Team with Trish at the Waitaki Resource Recovery Park.

## Waitaki Primary Hui

Based at the Oamaru Yacht Club, and spending the morning at the Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony, ākoka from across the Waitaki district gathered for our annual Enviroschools primary hui - a celebration of learning, connection and kaitiakitaka.

Ākoka learned about threats to the Oamaru blue penguins, did a waste audit, jumped like penguins across 'hazards' and later learnt about water catchments, rubbish and recycling, and what we can do in the classroom to make better choices with our waste minimisation.

The day was sunny and hot as ākoka shared their ideas between schools to gain ideas for what they could do back in their own classrooms. A big thank you to all the schools, kaiako and facilitators who made this day possible. Together, we're growing a greener, more sustainable Waitaki!



Waitaki ākoka study the different types of rubbish that has been picked up by the Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony.



Congratulations to Daisy! Daisy is the first recipient of the Enviroschools Shield at Clutha Valley School, for her work championing a clean and healthy outdoor space.



## Schools in Action



*St Leonards ākoka started the day with the Enviroschools activity, The Last Sunflower, which is a focus activity about sustainable decision-making.*



*Waiwera South ākoka have been taking care of the Waiwera river with a planting site since 2019 and the site is now thriving!*



*Omakau ākoka used the pumpkins harvested from their garden and celery from their tunnel house to make a pot of soup big enough to share.*



*Passionate ākoka from the Queens Envirogroup rallied together to develop their Beeswax wrap project. The students set up at the Farmers Market with their 100 beeswax wraps and care instruction stickers, all handmade with aroha.*



## Queenstown Primary Hui



At the end of October, Queenstown schools came together for the Queenstown Enviroschools Primary Hui - Being Zero Waste Heroes.

Ākoka prepared a table of shared kai, using produce from the Queenstown School garden and visited four activity stations, each focusing on a different aspect of waste reduction including low waste living with household cleaners, sorting recycling and cooking with seasonal produce.

Making t-shirt bags was a big hit, even with whānau, who were amazed at how easy they were to make and helped ākoka to understand the different type of clothing fibres and how to repurpose clothes that are destined for landfill.

All students left with their own cleaning products and no sew t-shirt bag, along with the inspiration to be Zero Waste Heroes by sharing ways of reducing waste with their whānau, kaiako, and peers.



*Ākoka prep vegetables ready for cooking.*

## Clutha Primary Hui



Ākoka from schools across Clutha rolled up their sleeves and got hands-on with nature at the Year 5-10 Enviroschools Hui — planting native trees and weaving harakeke crowns with the Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau | Sinclair Wetlands team, making origami seedling pots and spotting native birds with Enviroschools facilitators, and identifying pest plants and traps with Otago Regional Council's Biosecurity team.

It was an inspiring day of connection, learning, and kaitiakitanga in action — showing how our young environmental leaders are nurturing the land and their communities for a sustainable future. A big thank you to Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau for offering us their space and letting Clutha ākoka leave a planting legacy they can be proud of.



*Clutha ākoka listen to instructions to get ready to plant native trees at Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau Sinclair Wetlands for the Clutha Enviroschools Hui.*



# Enviroschools Ōtākou

## Our Tīma Out and About!



*Ōtepoti Facilitators, Jennie and Megan, during their Ōtepoti Primary Hui at Orokonui Ecosanctuary.*



*Clutha Facilitator, Scott, helps Rosebank School ākoka with making paper from recycled paper.*



*Central Otago Facilitator, Lucy, stands in front of Orkney Wetlands with Alexandra Primary School, ready for a day of learning.*

## Enviroschools Ōtākou Tīma



Lexie Davidson  
Regional Coordinator- Central  
Otago Regional Council  
Lexie.Davidson@orc.govt.nz  
Enviroschools@orc.govt.nz  
027 233 8325

Leisa de Klerk  
Regional Coordinator Lead  
Otago Regional Council  
Leisa.deKlerk@orc.govt.nz  
Enviroschools@orc.govt.nz  
027 243 0027



Damian Foster  
Wānaka Facilitator  
damian@  
wastebusters.co.nz



Lucy Francke  
Central Otago  
Facilitator  
enviroschools@  
coreap.org.nz



Nicky Gray  
Queenstown  
Facilitator  
nicky@  
wastebusters.co.nz



Jolene Barclay  
ECE Facilitator  
jolene.barclay@  
wmkindergartens.org.nz



Megan Greer  
Dunedin Facilitator  
megan.greer@  
dcc.govt.nz



Jennie Upton  
Dunedin Facilitator  
jennie.upton@  
dcc.govt.nz



Chantal Barnes  
Waitaki Facilitator  
cbarnes@  
waitaki.govt.nz



Scott Martin  
Clutha Facilitator  
scott.martin@  
cluthadc.govt.nz

