Griffith students supporting local organisations to turn talk into sustainable action

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Organisations across Australia are faced with an increasing demand to take a more sustainable approach to their business and processes. Yet for many, the path to sustainability can often be hindered by a lack of knowledge, time or both. Enter Green Steps, a Griffith University education program providing organisations with an opportunity to host student interns on a short-term sustainability related project.

Green Steps is an award-winning sustainability program run in universities and organisations across Australia and the UK. It empowers young leaders with practical skills and tools that enable them to resolve sustainability issues in the workplace – bridging the gap between education and real life experience as a sustainability consultant.

Current Green Steps intern Meaghan Webster, who graduated with a degree in Environmental Management at Griffith, is currently developing a holistic sustainability strategy at Corinda State High School through a 15-day Green Steps placement.

Meaghan was one of 16 participants in the program who received training on environmental auditing, communication techniques and behaviour change theory along with project planning and management. This training is coupled with hands-on practical work experience in an organisation working on a sustainability project. For Meaghan, this means assisting Corinda State High School with a strategic and specific sustainability plan.

‘Corinda previously had implemented sustainability initiatives, but there was no overarching scheme’ says Meaghan.

Corinda’s ultimate goal is to be completely carbon-neutral, and Meaghan has assisted them in finding the resources and tools to make this a reality. This has included collaborating closely with Energetic Communities, a social enterprise developing Community Owned Renewable Energy (CORE).

‘The first project will be to implement a recycling program, which will be a great way to engage both staff and students. Sustainability requires buy-in from everyone at all levels, so a school is the perfect opportunity to educate all ages on environmental initiatives.’
Producing a strategy on sustainability for Corinda State High School has provided Meaghan with valuable insight into the way individuals and organisations perceive and respond to environmental issues. And in addition, Corinda aims to be the first school in Queensland to achieve a carbon-neutral status. ‘This strategy can then become a template for other schools to use – it can pave the way for sustainable practice and education all over the state’ Meaghan explains.

Helen Jamieson, Principal at Corinda agrees. ‘The big breakthrough for us in having Meaghan on board was being able to tap into her knowledge and networks in sustainability. She’s brought in new ideas and introduced us to local community groups that are now bringing us closer to achieving our goals. It has been invaluable having Meaghan do her internship with us.’ says Helen.

Meaghan is planning to return to Griffith University to pursue a PhD in ethical consumption and its contribution to realising sustainability.

Green Steps interns offer organisations the opportunity to kick-start a new environmental initiative or accelerate an existing one. Internship hosts can be from anywhere - not-for-profit organisations, small businesses, government and large corporations across a range of sectors, from banking to mining and aviation to habitat reclamation. Green Steps provides organisations with access to high calibre university students for 15 days work on a sustainability project to support core business objectives. Through the program, organisations are able to gain valuable support and a fresh perspective on reducing their environmental footprint.

If you think your company can benefit from a Green Steps intern, please contact helena.schulze@greensteps.edu.au or visit www.greensteps.edu.au/interns