



Partnership for sustainability and diversity

A dynamic community partnership focused on promoting renewable energy and gender diversity

At a glance

Partner:
Dapto High School

Location:
Dapto, New South Wales
Australia

Value:
\$25,000 cash
In-kind support

Highlights

- A broad partnership between EDL and Dapto High School that addresses key areas of shared interest for us and the school.
- Involves a range of activities to increase awareness of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and non-traditional career opportunities among female students and to support the school's uptake of solar energy.

The background

EDL has had a long association with Dapto High School through the nearby National Maintenance Facility at Appin, in the Macarthur region of New South Wales.

Since 2011, EDL has recruited Dapto High School students through our apprenticeship program. Upon completion of their apprenticeship, many of these students have gone on to join our workforce at Appin or other EDL sites in the region.

In addition to working with local businesses on the promotion of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and non-traditional career options, Dapto High School has an ongoing commitment to model an engaged and responsible attitude towards ecological sustainability. Key initiatives include:

- installing solar panels
- including the school's electricity usage data in mathematics lessons to increase student interest
- composting organic waste from the school canteen and hospitality kitchens.

The opportunity

In 2015, EDL's collaboration with Dapto High School started to focus on gender diversity amongst our workforce.

A female student had sought the school's assistance to explore a career in mechanics and they connected her to EDL. We took her on as an apprentice and began promoting careers in STEM with EDL amongst Dapto High School's female students.

When EDL became aware of Dapto High School's fundraising efforts to install solar panels, we were keen to support the school's commitment to renewable energy.

It was an opportunity to build on our mutually beneficial partnership, and the *Partnership for sustainability and diversity* was developed.



(From left to right) Former Dapto High School student and now EDL employee Tiffany Temminck, student Ethan Graham, school liaison Peter Johnson, Principal Andrew Fitzsimons, EDL CEO James Harman and student Molly Chapman.

The partnership

The *Partnership for sustainability and diversity* operates with a dual focus on promoting gender diversity in STEM careers, and renewable energy.

Research* has shown that many girls avoid taking up careers in STEM for reasons including:

- perceptions that STEM careers are masculine and therefore 'unfeminine'
- girls are provided with less access to STEM related activities.

EDL helps address these factors by creating awareness of the range of careers in STEM and EDL. We host school visits to our sites to educate the students on our operations and the energy industry. We also ensure that communication about career opportunities appeals to all students, with specific sections addressing common concerns among female students.

Our female employees attend school sessions or site visits to relate their personal experiences as women in STEM to encourage female students to take up STEM careers.

In the environmental sustainability component of the partnership, EDL contributed \$25,000 to Dapto High School to install solar panels and transfer the school's energy use to a renewables position.

The outcomes

Since 2011, EDL has recruited four female students (of a total of seven) through our apprenticeship program.

Our contribution towards the solar panels provided nearly 70% of the cost of the panels, which enabled Dapto High School to achieve their fundraising target sooner.

Once installed, the 400 solar panels are expected to reduce school operating costs by \$20,000–\$25,000 annually, avoiding nearly 100 tonnes of carbon being released in the process.**

Sources:

**GIRLS' FUTURE – OUR FUTURE: The Invergowrie Foundation STEM Report 2017*

**Dapto High School

Photo credit: Sylvia Liber/Illawarra Mercury