

### 2023 Group Youth Conservation Award

Australia's youth play a vital role in conserving Australian flora and fauna and can significantly contribute to wildlife conservation through innovative projects and ideas. It is young people who can drive lasting and sustainable change, who will become the next ambassadors in wildlife conservation and, hopefully, the successors to the Board of the Society. We aim to inspire young people to have a stake in wildlife conservation by rewarding and recognising their efforts.

The Group Youth Conservation Award for 2023 was presented to **MacGregor Outside School Hours Care** of MacGregor, Queensland.

MacGregor Outside School Hours Care has been operating for four years. Their sustainability group meets regularly to conceptualise ideas to promote conservation within the community. The group periodically goes to the park for clean-ups, has engaged an Indigenous consultant to facilitate education and conservation programs with staff and children, has planted a native garden space with native bees, and has numerous recycling/litter collection programs within the school. Over 450 children are involved each week, and their practices have started to be embedded in their program. No single-use items are allowed, and this has extended to fetes. In addition, many families have begun picking up the programs at home.

#### Acceptance Speech from MacGregor Outside School Hours Care

We at MacGregor Outside School Hours Care, operating as a not-for-profit organisation under the auspices of the Parent and Citizens Association of MacGregor State School, are deeply honoured and humbled to have been awarded the prestigious 2023 Group Youth Conservation Award by the Australian Wildlife Society. This recognition stands as a testament to the dedication and innovation of our team in fostering environmental stewardship among the youth in our community.

Central to our winning initiative is the Forest Friday program, a cornerstone of MacGregor Outside School Hours Care's offerings, where a local Indigenous Elder, affectionately known as Uncle Steve, leads a group of

students on weekly excursions to walk on Country within the nearby parklands. Through these outings, participants gain invaluable insights into Indigenous culture and traditions while also learning about the significance of preserving our local environment. Uncle Steve's guidance and wisdom have been instrumental in enriching the experiences of the children, fostering a deep connection to the land, and instilling in them a sense of responsibility towards its conservation.

This accolade is not solely attributed to MacGregor Outside School Hours Care but is equally shared with Uncle Steve and the dedicated team comprising educators, administrators, and volunteers who have tirelessly worked to cultivate this unique partnership. Together, with

the unwavering support of the MacGregor State School Parent and Citizens Association, we have been able to broaden community understanding of our nation's First Peoples and integrate Indigenous perspectives into our collective consciousness.

Moving forward, MacGregor Outside School Hours Care remains steadfast in its commitment to sustainability, ensuring that our programs continue to uphold the values espoused by the Australian Wildlife Society. Through environmental education, public awareness campaigns, advocacy efforts, hands-on conservation activities, and active community involvement, we strive to nurture a generation of environmentally conscious citizens passionate about preserving our natural heritage for generations to come.



2023 Youth Conservation Award Recipient (Group). L to R: Zoe (Student), Katherine Gotera (MOSHC Coordinator), Imogen (Student), and Bella Campbell (MOSHC Lead Educator).



MOSHC Operations Manager, Amanda Lowe, with Coordinator, Nathan Chu, and students Aaden, Maximus, Isaac, San, Joshua, Ahana, Alexis, and Alexander.