

Sustainable schools program wins award

By Ewa Kretowicz
City Reporter

A program which teaches ACT school children about water, energy and low-carbon living, has won the sixth annual Keep Australia Beautiful ACT Sustainable Cities Awards.

More than 23,000 students are involved in the Australian Sustainable Schools program run by the ACT Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water.

Program coordinator Vanessa Whelan said nine waste-wise schools achieved a 58 per cent reduction in waste to landfill and 22 water-wise schools reduced water costs by 37 per cent. The program taught children to think about resources and their use.

"We won the award because out of 127 schools in the ACT we have 114 registered as sustainable schools working with us," Ms Whelan said.

Evatt Primary School principal Irene Gilbert said the school had installed solar panels, six water tanks and planned a vegetable garden as part of the program.

"They've developed environment centres with vegies and worm farms and they are collecting organic food scraps but a lot of the things that are happening at the schools are driven by students," Ms Gillard said.

Evatt Primary School pupils and environmental leaders Nick Chenery, Tessa Slater, Meg Hennessy and Dante Lamb attended the awards ceremony at the Legislative Assembly yesterday.

Year 6 pupils Nick and Tessa said they had learned a lot.

"It's good to help people in our school just be aware of what Canberra is doing with its



ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS: Evatt Primary School's Dante Lamb, 10, left, Tessa Slater, 11, Meg Hennessy, 11, and Nick Chenery, 11. They were at the Legislative Assembly for the ACT Sustainable Cities Awards yesterday. Photo: ANDREW SHEARGOLD

greenhouse emissions and getting it back to the state where it was better," Nick said.

The chair of the judging committee, Engineers Australia's Rolfe Hartley, said the standards of entries were improving.

"For the first time this year we have had a number of organisations

who were able to lodge entries that addressed multiple categories."

The Community Action and Partnerships Award, sponsored by *The Canberra Times*, was awarded to the Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water for the Banksia Street Wetlands.

The Australian National University

won three categories, including the Heritage and Culture Award for the Mt Stromlo Observatory Restoration.

The ACT Australian Sustainable Schools program is now a finalist in the National Australian Sustainable Cities Awards to be announced in Sydney on November 1.