

Speaking 4 the Planet

10 Year Anniversary Evaluation
2013 – 2022



Phil Smith
Founder and CEO, Speaking 4 the Planet

This brief evaluation report provides information on the achievements and impacts of the **Speaking 4 the Planet** initiative over the period 2013-2022.

Prepared by **Phil Smith**, with the assistance of **Hanh Do**
Graphic designer **Petur Farkas**

December 2022

supported by  **Sutherland Shire
Environment Centre**

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**Art is key to engaging
audiences where words alone
may fail; art has the capacity
to act as a catalyst for
change.**

Teacher, Parramatta, 2019

What is S4P?

Speaking 4 the Planet is an Arts-based competition for young people. It invites participants to express themselves and their ideas about a sustainable world through the following modes:

- Speaking (prepared and impromptu)
- Drama (impromptu)
- Art (prepared and impromptu)
- Writing (prepared and impromptu)
- Video
- Memes
- Performance poetry
- Song

The Kids 4 the Planet competitions have started to include an impromptu, group-based STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) category.



Drama performance, Wingecarribee, 2017

Why S4P?

Science will provide us with the knowledge we need for a sustainable world. The Arts can change the world. S4P is an Arts-based approach to sustainability education and advocacy. I created Speaking 4 the Planet (S4P) in order to provide space, opportunity and acknowledgement for young people to express their concerns and hopes for the future. S4P exists because young people do have concerns and hopes for the future, and they want others to hear and know them. S4P exists because we believe speaking up and out is an essential means to creating a world worth living in. S4P exists to build advocates for the Earth and all the species on it.

It must be acknowledged that, without the enthusiasm and support of the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre — www.ssec.org.au — from the very beginning, S4P may not have come into being!

Paddy Pallin, an Australian outdoor, camping and hiking equipment company — www.paddypallin.com.au — has provided items for prizes for every S4P event from the first in 2013.

Also, local council funding has been crucial to helping S4P continue to expand and evolve.

Thank you for the kind contribution!

Armidale Regional Council • Blacktown City Council • Camden Council • Campbelltown City Council • Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Armidale • City of Canterbury Bankstown • Central Coast Council • Dubbo Regional Council • Eurobodalla Shire Council • Georges River Council • Inverell Shire Council • Liverpool City Council • Mid-Western Regional Council • Mosman Council • Narromine Shire Council • Randwick City Council • Sutherland Shire Council • Wagga City Council • Willoughby City Council



History of S4P

Originating in 2013 at The Jannali High School in Sydney, Australia, as an initiative for high school students, S4P has evolved to include primary schools (Kids 4 the Planet), universities and adults (Adults 4 Planet A).

S4P started in the Sutherland Shire local government area. Soon, half a dozen councils took it up and provided some financial support. Now, invitations go to all councils in NSW to support the initiative in their areas. It has run in city and regional areas.

Commencing in 2017, Lakemba Public School has hosted the Kids 4 the Planet competitions ever since. Each year, the whole school gets involved. All classes do lessons and produce items for decorating the hall for the events.

In 2018 in Aotearoa New Zealand, [Sustainable Ōtāutahi Christchurch](#) and the Canterbury branch of [NZAEE](#) collaborated to establish a S4P competition for local schools. A competition day has run successfully every year since with sponsorship from the regional council, [Environment Canterbury](#) as well as [Earth Sea Sky Equipment](#), [Orana Wildlife Park](#), [Ara Institute](#), and [Trees for Canterbury](#).

In 2019, S4P inspired an inaugural youth event that was supported by the Chaipattana Foundation — www.chaipat.or.th/eng/ — and held in conjunction with the World Environmental Education Congress in Bangkok. A youth event paralleled the WEEC in Prague in 2022 and another will accompany the WEEC in Abu Dhabi in 2024.

In 2020, the Eastern Alliance for Sustainable Learning — www.easl.com.au — and Environmental Education Victoria — www.eev.vic.edu.au — hosted the first S4P event in Victoria. Also in 2020, I worked with Deakin University — www.deakin.edu.au — to pilot a competition for universities. Trainee teachers from six Australian universities participated.

The first global S4P took place in 2020. As a pilot competition, invitations were sent to colleagues around the world. Young people from eight different countries participated: Hungary, Thailand, Vietnam, India, New Zealand, Spain, Turkey, Australia.

Golden Path Academics — www.gpa.edu.vn — hosted competitions in Viet Nam in 2021 and 2022. In 2023, a new model will be piloted: the competition will invite Vietnamese students from around the world to participate.

NetWaste — www.netwaste.com.au — hosted the first Adults 4 Planet A competition in 2021.

For most of the first ten years, S4P events were live – held in community halls, school halls, council chambers. In 2019, Covid forced a rethink. Since then, many of the S4P events have been online. In the future, S4P competitions will be a mix of online and live events.

Focus

S4P focuses on important sustainability issues. Over the decade, the competitions have used themes and topics relevant locally and globally. They have been drawn from:

- World Environment Day themes
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Local priorities (e.g. development, bushfires, river protection)
- Local campaigns (e.g. Lake Pedder in Tasmania).

Support

For each competition, a support package is prepared. These are designed with students in mind (rather than teachers), and they contain information on the competition structure, categories, topic, and judging criteria. They also provide links to relevant resources and articles. Where local councils have been sponsors, the councils have sent out packages of topic-related materials to the participating schools.

In some instances, online sessions on each of the competition categories have been held for students.



Poster, social media appearance, booklet and website.



Reach

S4P is reaching out to the world. And other parts of the world are reaching out for S4P.



As well as reach to schools, communities and countries, S4P has built productive relationships with:

- Local government in Australia and New Zealand
- Environmental NGOs in Australia, Thailand, New Zealand, China, Viet Nam
- Toastmasters groups
- Paddy Pallin (outdoor company) and Bunnings (hardware)
- International NGOs
- Private education companies
- Universities in Australia and Thailand
- Media

Student performances

Student speeches and performances have been very high quality. And they have hit the mark on being quirky and communicating effective, action-oriented messages related to the UN's World Environment Day theme. Suggestions have included alternative energy, food miles, soil and water quality, pollution, poverty, and local shopping. One **speech** proposed a National Left-Over Program that involved underground transport of city left-overs to country farms. Another ironically proposed we train animals to pick up litter and keep our streets clean.

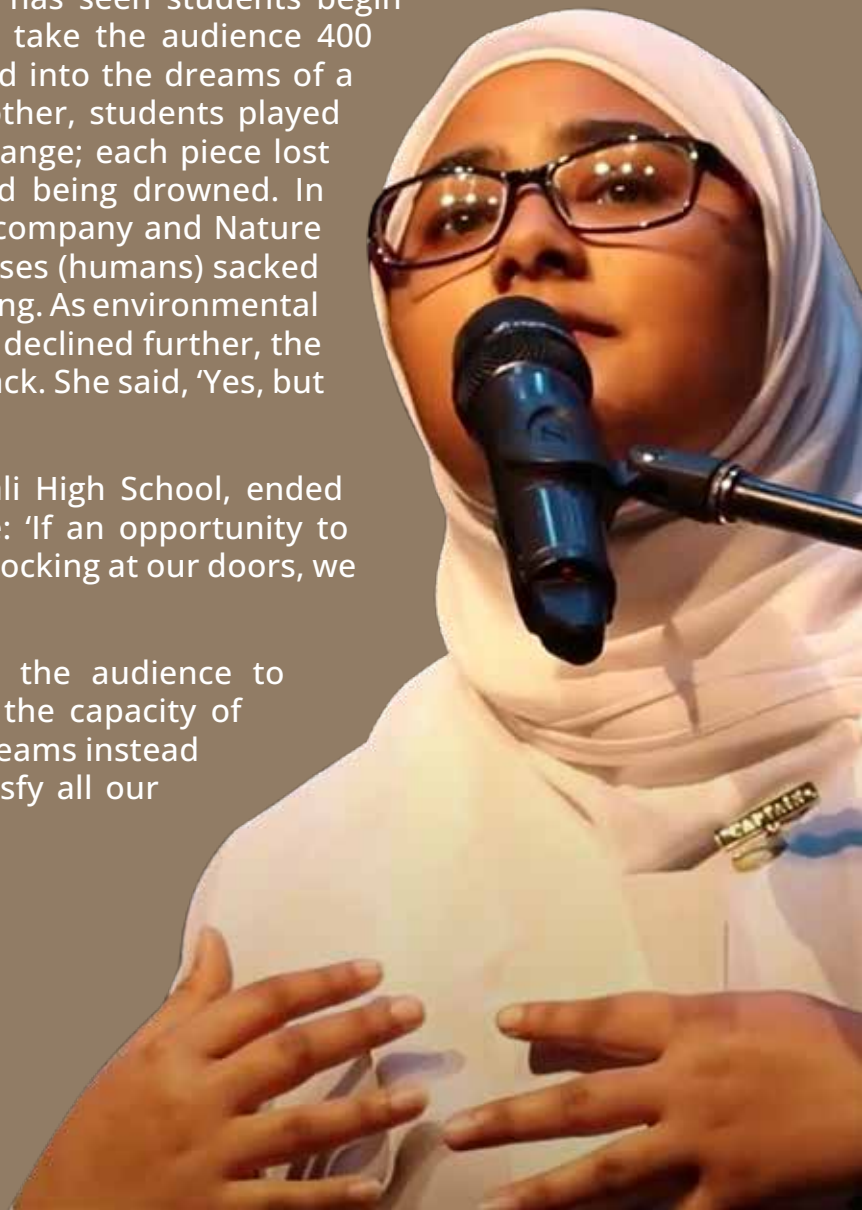
Other winners have spoken about ecological footprints and about how the world's poorest people would be hardest hit by global warming even though they contribute very little of the world's greenhouse gases. One student said, 'In this world we put profit above people, greed above need, and the rule of gold above the golden rule. We're using Mother Nature as a credit card with no spending limit, driving animals away from their homes and leading them to extinction never again to see their own uniqueness.'

In the impromptu **drama**, S4P has seen students begin a skit in the present and then take the audience 400 hundred years in the future and into the dreams of a climate change sceptic. In another, students played chess and discussed climate change; each piece lost in the game was a small island being drowned. In one performance, Earth was a company and Nature was its hardest worker. The bosses (humans) sacked nature because profits were falling. As environmental quality deteriorated and profits declined further, the bosses asked Nature to come back. She said, 'Yes, but there will be conditions.'

Tim, a student from The Jannali High School, ended his talk with a critical message: 'If an opportunity to save the planet doesn't come knocking at our doors, we must make one.'

A senior student, Josh, urged the audience to make a Copernican shift: put the capacity of the Earth at the centre of our dreams instead of insisting that the planet satisfy all our desires.

Student, Liverpool, 2017



Writing for the *I am Water* S4P competition in Victoria in 2020, Lily wrote

*Dry.
A droplet falls,
Specks of dust become
Nourished
But the heat dissolves it.
I realise
I am water.*

*So how many tears does it take?
To grow a forest*

Here are some links to great performances.

Mother Earth, Chloe. The winner of the first **Performance Poetry** category:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dtsdqHrtX2aO7WORWjsq6iRoFroNjlqX/view?ts=62ec749c>

Rap for climate change from youth in Christchurch, New Zealand: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1559044667823081&ref=sharing>

Dance and art, Bayview Secondary College, Tasmania, in support of restoring Lake Pedder: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1slDf-DytyhMPpzy85odpcm3eTb77Une7/view>



Summary of impacts

Every S4P event has been evaluated. These elements emerge.

Schools/Youth

1. Increased student confidence and competence in speaking up. They describe themselves as 'advocates'.
2. Helped students take on leadership roles.
3. Increased environmental awareness and activity at schools. Participation has stimulated school-based environmental education initiatives.
4. Inspired whole-school involvement in preparation for the competitions held at schools.
5. Expanded understanding of the social, political and economic elements of sustainability – not just the environment.
6. Established local networks of students. 'We learn that we are not alone,' said one concerned student.

Teachers

7. Increased teacher awareness and pedagogical changes, including increased integration and connections to multiple curriculum areas.
8. Increased awareness of the connections between sustainability and core competencies.

Communities

9. Improved relations between schools and local councils, businesses, and NGOs.
10. Increased appreciation of the role of the Arts in sustainability and in bringing about change.
11. Created public speaking and employment opportunities outside of school: Toastmasters, local councils, community events, AGMs, youth events.
12. Influenced the World Environmental Education Congress Secretariat to hold youth events with their biennial conferences.
13. Provided artworks for used in climate action campaigns and marches.

S4P was the reason I was nominated for the 2020 Earth Prize International.

Future

Governments, communities and education systems are beginning to put sustainability at the centre of their decision-making. As they must.

Speaking 4 the Planet will continue to be available for use as an education initiative highly effective in raising awareness, improving pedagogy, inspiring action, building networks, and influencing individual choices and broader policies.

S4P will continue to evolve and adapt to need and interest. In the near future, S4P will include these elements:

- Competitions for university students
- Global competitions
- Competitions for adults and community organisations

In addition, an Advocates 4 the Earth short course will be piloted.

If you are interested in finding out how you can adapt the S4P initiative for your audience and purpose, please contact Phil on phil@speaking4theplanet.org.au

Further information

Here's an article that says more about Speaking 4 the Planet:

<https://newbushtelegraph.org.au/speaking-4-the-planet-changing-the-world-one-presentation-at-a-time/>

And here's a short video on Speaking 4 the Planet:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12ooL9a_zvUpFGChBu9ho_7HDxRhM0z8I/view

Fantastic to be involved and meet so many passionate young people.

*Community member
and competition judge,
St George area,
2019*

**Do it.
It's fun.**

*Student, Armidale,
2019*