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## Survey confirms Australian schools fail to track energy use

With ‘back to school’ now a done deal, a [national survey](#) has revealed the significant potential to save energy and money in Australian schools goes largely untapped, yet the will for action is strong – with children found to be low carbon living influencers at home.

Funded by the [CRC for Low Carbon Living](#) (CRCLCL), the survey examined the attitudes and experiences of 120 people connected to schools and their beliefs around the built environment’s impact on health and learning.

Research leader, Curtin University Research Fellow and Managing Director of [Climate Clever](#), Dr Vanessa Rauland, said there is no national approach for measuring the operational performance of school buildings, including setting targets for improvement, or systemic methods for schools to reduce energy and water consumption and a review is urgently needed.

“School buildings and their precincts provide a low-cost, high-impact opportunity to save energy, water and money, plus reduce waste and carbon emissions, whilst providing students with great STEM learning opportunities.” said Dr Rauland.

“We discovered that although 94% of respondents supported their schools in tracking energy, water and waste production, only 28% of schools were tracking energy and 27% - less than a third - had an action plan or tools in place to reduce consumption,” she said.

The survey also showed that while energy forms the largest component of a school’s carbon footprint, most school sustainability programs targeted waste (77%) and water (49%), which are much more tangible than energy, which saw only 39% of programs target.

“The survey also showed that schools’ sustainability programs can influence the community, with 58% of respondents saying their child had influenced decisions at home, based on the sustainability or low carbon programs they were involved with at school,” said Dr Rauland.

Almost all surveyed believed the built environment and the space where children learn impacts student’s learning outcomes, suggesting exemplary buildings can improve not only children’s ability to learn, but also their knowledge around sustainability by using their buildings as a living laboratory.

“Schools need more stringent design and building codes, plus clear performance targets, to help lower emissions and save energy – especially if we are to meet Paris Agreement targets,” said Dr Rauland.

This was also supported by another report – [Built to Reform](#) – produced by the CRCLCL, ASBEC and ClimateWorks in 2018, which revealed that education buildings offered the most cost-effective carbon abatement opportunities within the built environment.

“Overall there is a need for a cost-effective, nationally coordinated effort to empower schools to pursue carbon and cost reduction individually, rather than rely on government. This approach can not only save money, it can provide significant learning opportunities for students around resource efficiency and low carbon living, which can also influence their families and the wider community,” she concluded.

The national percentage breakdown for respondents was: Victoria (32%), NSW (29%), WA (20%), QLD (7%) SA (6%), TAS (2%), NT (1%), Unspecified (3%).

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## About the CRC for Low Carbon Living Ltd

The CRC for Low Carbon Living (CRCLCL) is a national research and innovation hub that supports Australian industry to be globally competitive in the low carbon built environment sector.

It brings together property, planning, engineering and policy organisations with leading Australian researchers to develop new social, technological and policy tools for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment.

A key aim of the CRCLCL is to help cut Australia’s residential and commercial carbon emissions by 10 mega tonnes by 2020. It will do this by developing opportunities for lower-embodied carbon manufacturing, creating efficiency and productivity in the built environment sector, empowering and engaging communities, increasing the evidence base for government policy and planning, and building the sector’s capacity for high quality research, education and training.

The CRCLCL is supported by the Cooperative Research Centres programme, an Australian Government initiative.