Dr Mugheer holds the post of Director General of Abu Dhabi Education Council and is a member of the royal family reporting to the Crown Prince and Ruler of the United Arab Emirates. He was accompanied by Dr Karima Al Mazroui, P-12 Curriculum Division Manager (ADEC), Engineer Hamad Al Dhaheri, Executive Director Private Schools and Dr Arif Hammadi, Executive Director Higher Education.

Our afternoon together sped by as we shared the beauty of the forest, and were inspired by the bird life, especially the flock of yellow tailed black cockatoos. We had some damper and billy tea and shared stories from the Arabian Desert to the Australian bush.

Dr Mugheer was most impressed that the Outdoor and Environmental Education Centres were spread across the state and that some had been established up to 40 years ago.

“What foresight to establish such valuable educational learning environments so long ago. These centres are an amazing asset for teaching and learning in Queensland,” he said. He pondered the opportunities for development of such centres across the desert, island and city landscapes within the United Arab Emirates.

Article contributed by:
Noeleen Rowntree,
Principal, Bunyaville EEC

Below: Dr Mugheer presenting Education medallion from the Abu Dhabi Council – Education First, for important work in Environmental Education to Noeleen Rowntree and Debbie Ledger.
Conversations with various O&EEC staff indicate that a number of centres are investigating how digital technologies can be used to support and enhance student learning. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is one of only 7 general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum. The expectation is that “students...learn to use ICT effectively and appropriately to access, create and communicate information and ideas, solve problems and work collaboratively in all learning areas at school, and in their lives beyond school.”

At Toohey Forest Environmental Education Centre, staff are continuing to invest in updating facilities, equipment and their own skills to reflect the ICT requirements of the curriculum. Most recently, a 60 inch LCD television has been installed in the Understorey Room, enabling connectivity with a variety of digital devices including cameras, data loggers, infra-red motion sensors, nest box cameras and a high resolution microscope camera.

The centre is also in the early stages of trialling iPads, iBook’s and apps to support specific activities. For example, the EcoCentre Building Tour activity has traditionally required students to physically navigate their way round a number of “stations” and record information pertaining to sustainable building design. The new iBook format has enabled the inclusion of vignettes and interactive multi-choice questions, and extension material that could not be accommodated with the traditional signage. The intention is to make the iBook freely available through the iTunes store, enabling students from all over the state to access the educational resource.

The application of apps in the delivery of programs is also being assessed. Toohey Forest EEC is seeking to collaborate with University staff to develop an app to support aspects of field work. Griffith University have just released the Grows at Griffith free app which is an introductory guide to some of the common plants found in South East Queensland.

The centre has recently begun to use Survey Monkey to deliver pre- and post-visit online quizzes to support programs. The pre-visit quiz results enable centre staff to adjust programs to suit the ability level of the students prior to their arrival. The post-visit testing provides a measure of “distance travelled” and the impact of the program on student knowledge.

The ICT agenda at Toohey Forest EEC is being championed by new staff member, Sean Mead. If fellow staff would like to discuss developments at their own centre, Sean can be contacted on smead26@eq.edu.au or phone (07) 3735 7741.

Article contributed by: Darren Shepherd,
Principal, Toohey Forest EEC

Left: Students huddle around iPads to view a live video feed of a possum sleeping in a nest box. The video footage captured will be uploaded to the Toohey Forest website in the near future.
The Outdoor and Environmental Education Centres Principals’ Alliance jumped the gun a bit when we held the June meeting in the new building at Nudgee Beach. Since then the barricades have come down and the building is becoming an integral part of the centre’s operations with our resident Certificate 3 students and teachers putting up indigenous posters and information, and the many prep students who have visited this term enjoying the sun on the deck.

On Wednesday 7 August we hosted the Southern School Reef Guardian Schools’ Future Leaders’ Eco Challenge for the schools who joined Reef Guardian before it was closed to South East Queensland Schools. The event had more than 30 participants in attendance.

The event saw both partner organisations and schools enjoy the facilities and learn about some of the features installed to complement the centre’s already existing environmental initiatives.

Students visited both on-site facilities and our teaching areas on the Bay to learn about how we can assist to make the reef clean and strong again even though we are in South East Queensland. We also talked about the ongoing threats caused by pollution, and inappropriate use of the area and resources within the reef boundaries.

With a Smart Schools Subsidy Scheme application logged we are hoping to be able to revitalise the existing building and install a new touch tank system which will provide a wonderful teaching resource for students in the coming years.

Article contributed by:
Mary-Ann Pattison,
Principal,
Nudgee Beach EEC

The Honourable John-Paul Langbroek visits Tallebudgera Beach School & the Currumbin Community Farm Campus

Tallebudgera Beach School and the Currumbin Community Farm Campus staff had the pleasure of welcoming the Honourable John-Paul Langbroek, Minister for Education, Training and Employment, to their sites on Friday 12th July.

During his flying visit, Mr Langbroek watched a school group from Upper Mount Gravatt State School participate in team building activities on the beach. He also presented awards to the winning Diary Students from The Gap State School.

The visit then moved to Currumbin Valley where he was taken on a tour of the Farm Campus by Head of Campus, Andrew Lock. While there he met many of the volunteers who give their time to help out at the Farm Campus and presented the Volunteer of the Year Award.
Recently during the Miles National Science Week, July 23—25, the Columboola Staff and the Darling Downs South West Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator ran a series of Science activities for all 160 P—3 students at Miles, Condamine, Drillham and Dulacca State Schools.

Karen Long, the Gifted & Talented Co-ordinator secured funding for the 3 day programme of activities. The Columboola staff travelled to each location to deliver the programme of activities.

The students participated in activities developed by David Willis and Julie Orton to compliment the Science Unit the students were doing at school. The units included Place in Space, Life and Living, Observing Different Environments and Earth’s rotation, shadow–day/night.

Some of the activities were Biodegradable pots, tree life, environmental art, Sun, Moon & Earth’s rotation, moon phases and shadow print paper.

We are also involved in National Science Week at Mitchell, with David Willis running Astronomy nights for the students and families as part of a 3 day, 2 night extended school programme.

Article contributed by: Lawrence Hennelly, Acting Principal, Columboola EEC

National Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day was celebrated in partnership with Bunyaville Environmental Education Centre, Wavell Heights State School Preps and school community including Elders, families and the Aboriginal and Islander Community.

National Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day was first observed in 1988. The day was on Sunday 4th August with this year’s theme ‘Right here, Right Now Our Rights Matter!’

It was a day to remember as we learnt and experienced the bush together. There was native bee bush to honey taste, lemon myrtle tea to sip on; beuat didgeridoo playing that soothed our soul and colourful weaving as we looked for Koala Blue who was somewhere in the forest being safely cared for by the forest animals.

A wattle was planted in the ‘Feather’s Café’ to remember our special day together.

Article contributed by: Noeleen Rowntree, Principal, Bunyaville EEC