

Guardians of the planet

How can I make a difference? This is the question that teacher Miranda Mason noticed students asking about the big environmental challenges of the day. It led her to facilitate Earth Angels at St Aidan's Girls School, Corinda, Brisbane

THE Earth Angels are a group of students in years 5 to 7 who are committed to taking action to live more sustainable lives.

The Earth Angels meet at lunchtime once a week to discuss and determine the projects they will work on and carrying them out as a team with all members of the group involved. The group is led by five keen year 7 girls and assisted by Ms Mason to carry out their ideas.

Their first project, initiated in 2007, was a successful campaign to encourage the community to read the school newsletter online. After saving hundreds of reams of paper, the Angels completed a rubbish audit (discovering that about 700 pieces of rubbish are discarded daily). They initiated the regular Nude Food Days, encouraging their school mates to bring lunch without any packaging.

This led to the establishment of a worm farm to deal with food scraps and the establishment of a recycling system.

A variety of other projects followed including: tree planting for Montrose Access (a community organisation assisting children with disabilities), attending an environmental club camp at Wild Mountains, participating in speaking competitions and raising awareness about other environmental issues at school by holding lunchtime movies.

The club is now working on a new vegetable garden and mural for the school.

Ms Mason believes all Australian Groovy Green wins MIRANDA Mason's idea of developing Groovy Green schools with students as Earth Angels excited the judges and audience at the Ideas Festival Emerge Fresh Ideas session recently.

The \$1000 Colin Power prize was kindly offered by session host, the EIDOS Institute, an independent research institute and think tank whose main objective is to generate new ideas and influence public policy.

Miranda Mason's Groovy Green Schools concept can be seen on video: Headst@rt (www.couriermail.com.au/headstart) schools should have their own Groovy Green clubs, empowering children to take action in their communities and develop problem-solving skills.

The children are passionate and capable, they want to learn about climate change and understand the problems associated," she said.

To help teachers start clubs, Ms Mason has written a handy teachers resource called Groovy Green Ideas (available through Ready-Ed Publications www.readyed.com.au).

"We have to be the change we want to see in the world and every little bit helps," she said.

