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Media Release

Sustainable schools: International review released

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A just-released report, *Whole-school Approaches to Sustainability: An international review of sustainable school programs*, identifies a number of critical success factors to inform and facilitate the ongoing development of similar programs in Australia.

“This study has documented through research and anecdotal evidence that whole-school approaches to sustainability have an important contribution to make in shifting our communities towards sustainability,” says Associate Professor Daniella Tilbury, one of the review’s authors. “National policy and initiatives which support these approaches at the state and local level enhance involvement as well as the quality of practice.”

The review was performed by the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES) at Macquarie University, a national leader in sustainability education and research, for the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage. ARIES was established with funding from the Australian Government of \$2.3 million over three years.

The review was undertaken between March and June 2004, and involved documenting the experiences, achievements and lessons learnt from nationwide, whole-school sustainability programs in countries such as China, Sweden and New Zealand.

Key questions addressed by the study include:

- *What does a sustainable school look like?*
- *Is there a formula for ‘how’ to run an effective and wide-reaching whole-school sustainability program?*
- *Is there evidence of effective methods to engage the community in these endeavours?*
- *How can a program be effective?*

Among the critical success factors identified by the review were building multi-stakeholder partnerships; broadening an initial environmental management focus to embrace sustainability more holistically; and national school recognition through accreditation and certification. Aligning programs with national education, environmental and sustainability priorities is also crucial to the effective implementation of a whole-school sustainability program in Australia.

Electronic copies of the review can be downloaded from the ARIES website at <http://www.aries.mq.edu.au/news.htm> and will soon be available on the Department of the Environment and Heritage website at <http://www.deh.gov.au/education/>

To obtain a hardcopy, please email ariescoordinator@gse.mq.edu.au, or phone (02) 9850 7950.