

CABBAGE TREE ISLAND INTERPRETIVE EDUCATIONAL WETLAND WALKWAY

overview of the project

The Aboriginal community on Cabbage Tree Island have worked with WetlandCare Australia over recent years to protect the biodiversity values of littoral rainforest riparian areas and estuarine wetlands. To restore these areas, weed and rubbish removal occurred across a 2,250 square metre area and over 6,000 plants were installed, with a 97 percent survival rate.

This project also constructed a useful learning resource in the form of a wetland boardwalk that incorporated interpretive signage. The boardwalk continues to assist the local primary school, visiting students and the local community to learn about and get amongst the wetland. To complement the boardwalk an interactive website full of educational resources was created. The website focused on the Island's wetland environments, and the issues which threaten its environmental health.



Boardwalk and wetland viewing platform

how the project was carried out



Children's art on boardwalk poles

When this project began, the area between Cabbage Tree Island School and the adjacent riparian wetland zone was overgrown with weeds, littered with rubbish and was in need of rehabilitation. A local bush regeneration team made up of members of the local Indigenous community was formed and trained to carry out work to eradicate the weeds and clean up rubbish from the area. Once this was done, they re-established the riparian zone by planting native vegetation, including river mangroves and *Callisitemon* species.

Once the area was rehabilitated, a boardwalk was constructed through the wetlands, so that students from the school and members of the community could access and enjoy the site without causing damage. To accentuate the educational value of the boardwalk, interpretive signs were developed and installed. These signs contained information on the cultural heritage of the area, local flora and fauna and the importance of the estuarine wetland.

A website was also developed to further distil the educational messages regarding the importance of the wetland environment. The website was designed primarily for the children of Cabbage Tree Island Primary School. The website contains interactive password protected areas where the children have and can continue to enter details of fauna they have seen in the area, as well as water sampling results. This allows the children to enter information while preventing incorrect use by others.

outcomes now and in the future

Some wonderful environmental outcomes have been achieved in terms of completely rehabilitating a stretch of estuarine wetland and an adjacent riparian zone, while allowing skill development for the local Indigenous bush regeneration team. The local community and, in particular, the primary school has contributed to the development of valuable long-term educational resources and strong relationships between the Aboriginal population and natural resource management organisations and professionals.

The project was undertaken in such a way as to harness local community involvement and to capture traditional knowledge and as a result strong ownership of the project site and outputs has been developed. The Cabbage Tree Island community and Public School now have a wonderful resource to appreciate and share with other schools and communities. This has instilled an incredible amount of pride in the community and in those involved.

To date the project has reached approximately 150 people and it is estimated that the ongoing communication and dissemination strategy will result in information reaching approximately another 1,000 individuals beyond the life of this project.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

This project resulted in an increase in bush regeneration and other natural resource management skills amongst the local community and consequently the enhancement of the biodiversity values of the Island's wetlands.

Changes in key staff during the course of the project resulted in the project taking longer than expected, however the commitment and professional skills of all those involved in the project have ensured that the project's outcome were achieved.