

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION AND COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT PROJECT

overview of the project



Inspecting saltbush plantings

The Nari Nari Tribal Council (NNTC) was established in 2000 to preserve and protect Aboriginal cultural sites and the sensitive ecosystem of the riverine plains around Hay in western NSW. The NNTC carried out this project to revegetate and preserve a 250 hectare section of the plain. The project achieved revegetation of 270 hectares with native shrubs, and around 1,500 seedlings were propagated throughout the project. The site had been denuded by previous poor stocking practices and the ongoing drought, leaving it low in habitat value and vulnerable to erosion. Components of the project included establishment of a propagation nursery, weed control, construction of a boundary fence and large-scale planting work. The project has restored a large piece of tribal land and protected it from further degradation. The new nursery, constructed by converting an old hayshed, has provided an economical source of seedlings for similar projects in the future.

how the project was carried out

Much of the work for the project was done by four people from the NNTC and the Hay Local Aboriginal Council along with a seed collection manager and a project manager. Two Elders from the Hay Aboriginal community were present to offer advice on cultural matters, and family members helped out with labouring, materials or transport. The boundary fence was built by a contractor who combines his work with the training and employment of Aboriginal people.

Weeding of the site was already underway as part of a larger scheme, but this project enhanced the scheme with extra spraying. The original intention was to revegetate the land with plants propagated in the nursery, but growth rates were slower than anticipated. The team decided to direct sow the site with seeds, and also tried a new method using clay seed balls made by packing fertiliser-enriched local clay around the seed. These balls only germinate after prolonged soaking rain, ensuring that seeds are not wasted by early germination with no follow-up rain. In addition, seeds cannot be eaten by birds and animals.

outcomes now and in the future

The new nursery will continue to supply large numbers of seedlings for revegetation works into the future, and will offer an opportunity for continued training. The team achieved a 90 per cent germination rate in the nursery, with over 1,500 seedlings now growing in the nursery. The nursery also provides a place for the production of the clay seed balls. This initiative is still being monitored, but the team is confident that seed balls will give good results for future revegetation works. A handbook of nursery information has been compiled for future use, containing advice on all aspects of seed collection, treatment, propagation and revegetation. The

boundary fencing provided additional outcomes, as a team of Aboriginal trainees worked as part of the contractor's team and have now acquired valuable fence building skills.

This site is a declared protected area, and work to preserve it will continue indefinitely. The area has been mapped using GPS and satellite software to make future monitoring and maintenance of vegetation easier.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

This project has been successful in revegetating and protecting an area of more than 250 hectares, and has provided training for many community members in the process. There were



Seedlings growing in the nursery

some delays in carrying out the project, caused by unreliable rainfall and slow growth rates of propagated plants. The seed collection manager was initially unable to supply the full seed order because of the scarcity of some species in the area. After travelling further afield, she was able to collect all the necessary seed to supply the project. These sorts of problems are often experienced in projects where outcomes rely on nature, and extra time should be factored into plans to allow for delays.