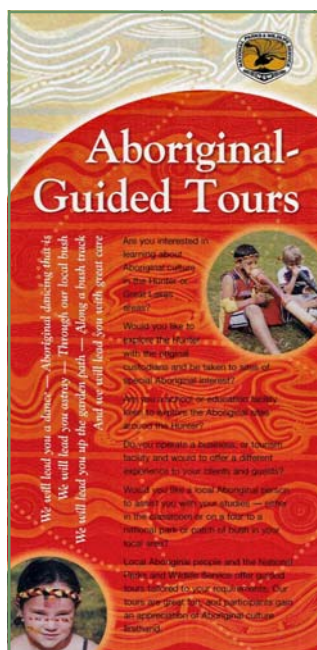


ABORIGINAL CULTURE TOUR GUIDE TRAINING

overview of the project

National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) conducted this project to train Aboriginal people as tour guides, to help educate the broader community about Aboriginal culture and affinity with the land. NPWS determined a need for non-Aboriginal Australians to gain good quality information from the traditional land owners, and Aboriginal people had expressed a desire to be involved in tour guiding. Sixty-five people were trained across the Hunter region of New South Wales in a series of two-day programs combining theory and practical learning. The training prepared guides for the Aboriginal Heritage Discovery Programs in schools, National Parks programs and private tour companies. A positive outcome of the project was that some of the trainees have continued employment as a result of this program. The project has been a step forward in engaging the wider community in understanding the importance of traditional linkages with the land and respect for the environment.

how the project was carried out



The NPWS gathered information for their training resources from their own records, and from consultation with the Aboriginal Land Councils and traditional owner groups. This ensured that the most meaningful information was included in the training kit. The training manual is structured to suit the needs of the trainees, and contains current interpretation methods and principles. A two day training program was developed to support these materials.

The training program was conducted across the five land council areas of the Hunter region. It had a strong practical

emphasis and was built around field-based learning and simulated tours, providing 'real' situations for practice. The strong bonds between Aboriginal people and the land and the concept of living harmoniously with the land were a focus throughout the courses.

outcomes now and in the future

The program produced two very positive outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Hunter region and for the belief system of the wider community. Firstly, the NPWS developed good working relationships with a number of local Aboriginal groups, some of whom are keen to participate in future tourism programs. Three groups have expressed interest in supplying guides for a variety of privately run and NPWS

tourism operations. Land Council or Elders groups may also consider running their own tours in the future, based on the training gained in this program. Aboriginal people who have undertaken the training have experienced positive outcomes for their self esteem and personal development.

Secondly, NPWS educational programs run with the help of the Aboriginal guides are expanding awareness of Aboriginal culture and its links with the environment among the wider Australian society. This is a more gradually evolving outcome, but a far-reaching one that will have a significant effect on mainstream Australian attitudes and the understanding of Aboriginal history and culture.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The NPWS conducted a successful program of tour guide training and education for its Discovery Walks, Talks and Tours scheme. The project was assessed as being empowering and transforming for the trainees and the course was given some excellent evaluation comments on the practical and personal knowledge gained. Sixty-five people were trained in tour guiding and ten of these were subsequently given further on-the-job training as Discovery rangers.

There were some challenges in setting up the program, it was sometimes time consuming organising course timing and overcoming travel difficulties for the attendees, some of whom lived at remote locations. Forging good working relationships and communication with the Aboriginal people involved, often took more time than anticipated, however the overall achievements outweighed the delays. Tour guiding is a productive way of harnessing the long tradition of spoken history and story telling in Aboriginal culture.