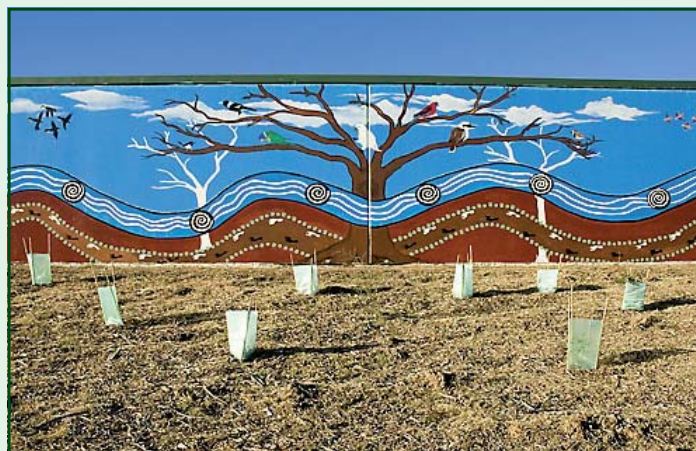


KOORIES CARING FOR ROPES CREEK

overview of the project

The *Koories Caring for Ropes Creek* project resulted in the restoration of 120 metres of the riparian zone of Ropes Creek at Minchinbury in Sydney's west. The area was cleared of weeds and replanted with 200 native plants that were propagated from locally collected seed. With the permission of the owners, an existing concrete wall adjacent to the site was decorated with an Aboriginal art mural designed to show the importance of the site both culturally and environmentally.

The vegetation in this culturally significant area is Sydney Coastal River Flat Forest, which is an Endangered Ecological community. Prior to the rehabilitation works this area was facing a number of problems including soil erosion and compaction, loss of habitat, weed infestation and vandalism. Vandalism included trail bike riding, deliberate destruction of native saplings, fire, graffiti and illegal rubbish dumping. All of these issues are significantly reduced as a result of the work in this area.



An Aboriginal mural is a feature of the newly restored site

how the project was carried out

Six members of the local Indigenous community were trained in bush regeneration which enabled them to carry out the restoration works at the site. With this new found knowledge they undertook weed control, mulching and planting on 120 metres of the riparian zone. The weeding methods used included hand weeding and herbicide application. For re-establishment of native species brush matting techniques were used which involves cutting and laying of seed laden branches on cleared ground. The seeds drop and germinate and the branches provide a protective vegetative cover while the new plants establish.

Once initial weed removal was completed, planting and mulching occurred. To maintain the local genetic diversity of plants, 200 plants were propagated from locally collected seed and planted. Mulching of the planted areas prevented weeds from returning to the site and helped to improve the soil condition and reduce evaporation from the soil.

The Aboriginal art mural was designed and painted by a number of local Aboriginal artists. It is 110 metres long by 3.5 metres wide. Construction of the mural used over 500 litres of paint and 248 hours of work. The mural not only covered existing graffiti, but displays cultural and environmental education messages. The participants in this project felt the graffiti was having a negative impact on their environmental achievements at the bush regeneration site and the mural was welcomed as a solution to the problem.

outcomes now and in the future

This has been a successful project with many positive outcomes for the local Aboriginal community and the wider community. The project promotes environmental awareness of the Endangered Ecological Community and the environment as whole, as well as

showcasing Aboriginal cultural practices in caring for country. As a result of the rehabilitation of this site and improved community awareness there has been decreased illegal dumping, sapling destruction, trail bike riding and graffiti. The mural has also created a feeling of active custodianship amongst the local community.

This site acts as a good example of practical bush regeneration, which has successfully reduced the weeds, improved the soil condition and created habitat. It is also a successful Aboriginal project site, which could be used to motivate and mentor other Aboriginal groups attempting Landcare or Bushcare for the first time.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

This has been a successful restoration project that has had a positive impact on the local community, by providing training and employment opportunities for the local Aboriginal population. Bush regeneration training has provided members of the local Indigenous community with skills to pursue further job opportunities in this field. Four of the six people trained by this project have found further employment in the bush regeneration field.

A major benefit of the program is that sustainable stakeholder relationships between this group and the local council, local residents and the local Catchment Management Authority (CMA) have been developed. This will allow these groups to communicate more readily with each other on future on-ground works in the area.

A major challenge for this project has been ongoing vandalism of the mural. The mural has now been protected by an anti-graffiti coating.