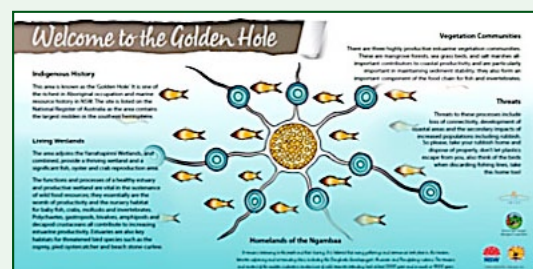


GOLDEN HOLE COMMUNITY PROTECTING HOMELANDS

overview of the project

The Clybucca Historic Site on the Macleay River floodplain contains the largest recorded midden in the Southern Hemisphere. It is located adjacent to the Yarrahapinni wetlands in an area known to the local community as the "Golden Hole" as it was, and remains today, a significant source of marine resources to Aboriginal people. This unique midden site contains well-preserved shell and bone fragments up to 5000 years old while most other coastal middens in NSW are less than 3000 years old.

Booroongen Djugan Aboriginal Corporation and the Stuarts Point Aboriginal Community Environment Group received a grant through the Protecting our Places Program to assist with the rehabilitation and cultural healing of this important site. Their aim was to restore the degraded farmland back to its original cultural landscape and educate the community about the connection and significance of the midden site to Aboriginal people.



Interpretive signage at the site.

how the project was carried out

The project commenced with a Community Planning workshop to discuss the main concepts and rehabilitation strategy with the community. As the midden is located on land managed as a Historic Site by National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS), the project worked closely with local rangers.



Students of Stuarts Point Public School sitting around the story table.

The dominant weed species were identified and mapped, and Aboriginal contractors undertook control of noxious and threatening weeds. This included treatment and removal of Giant Parramatta Grass, Lantana, Bitou Bush and Morning Glory, and

manual removal of Madeira Vine. Local seeds were collected and germinated for planting around the outdoor meeting area.

A picnic table or "story table" was installed at the site along with some low key interpretive signage. The signs educate visitors about the historic cultural environment, the climatic changes relating to sea level rise, and the continuing importance of the site to the Gumbayngirr and Dunghutti peoples. Local indigenous artists designed the artwork for the table and signage while students from Stuarts Point Public School assisted with the painting of the table and seats. The seating area incorporates a sandstone fireplace for sustaining cultural practices.

outcomes now and in the future

The grantee conducted bush regeneration across more than 50,000m² of degraded land, and revegetated a small area. Ongoing bush regeneration at the site will control weeds in the midden area.

The project has received positive feedback from both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community. Local Elders and traditional custodians in particular have been happy with the outcomes of the

project. The project has led to recognition and further employment for one of the Aboriginal contractors who has been retained by National Parks and Wildlife Service as a preferred contractor.

Three local Aboriginal people are now participating in a cultural guiding project which makes use of the new signage and table for their education activities. The project will continue to educate and bring people together in a culturally sensitive environment and provide a gathering place for cultural, educational and recreational activities for years to come.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

High rainfall during the project period and the site's location on a major floodplain sometimes made access difficult. The grantee managed this by working with contractors to reschedule works.

Golden Hole was traditionally an important meeting place for several Aboriginal nations including the Ngambaa, Gumbayngirr and Dunghutti people. Working with people from multiple Aboriginal nations was sometimes a challenge, particularly in making sure that the signage was acceptable to all members of the Aboriginal community. Extensive consultation, including meetings with local Elders and the Aboriginal Land Council; using The Native Bee newsletter to inform the different Aboriginal nations on the project; and obtaining local media coverage ensured that agreement was reached.

The project has increased Aboriginal employment, with one of the contractors completing the New Enterprise Incentives Scheme during the project and securing ongoing work with NPWS. The project has helped showcase the dedication of Aboriginal bush regenerators in helping rehabilitate an area that has strong significance for local Aboriginal people.