

WETHERILL PARK BUSHLAND REHABILITATION AND CULTURAL INDUSTRY INITIATIVE

overview of the project



The TAFE site showing protection of restored areas

This project was carried out to protect and rehabilitate two adjacent vegetation remnants of Cumberland Plain Woodland on Technical and Further Education (TAFE) land and the Wetherill Park Reserve. These adjacent woodland remnants had been identified as spotted gum forest by a TAFE Environmental Officer. Spotted gums were recognised as an endangered community in the Urban Bushland Biodiversity Survey of 1997. Fairfield City Council and TAFE collaborated to implement this project, which also included a wide ranging public awareness campaign. Volunteers planted over 700 native seedlings during the project and natural revegetation has been encouraged by constructing protective fencing around weeded areas.

With an intensive program of bush regeneration, rubbish removal, fencing and community working bees, the project has provided almost continuous vegetation between the two sites, improving biodiversity and habitat value. The project has struck a realistic balance between environmental preservation and community activities in an urbanised environment and has increased public awareness of the importance of native bushland remnant areas.

how the project was carried out

Contractors carried out the bush regeneration work, which included weeding, spraying, mulching and planting. On the TAFE site, the volunteers carried out weekly weeding throughout spring using a variety of methods. Bollards were installed to protect regenerated areas from vehicles accessing the site, while still allowing pedestrian and wheelchair access. On the Wetherill Park Reserve site, fences were constructed to protect newly worked areas from mowing and to allow seeds to germinate naturally without disturbance. Work in the reserve was supported by four community working bees to plant native seedlings. The project also included the development of a weaving garden in the reserve, a cultural initiative for growing native plants suitable for weaving.

Community education was an important part of the project. One full day workshop was conducted, including theory and practical sessions on bush regeneration, generating positive feedback from participants. Signage and interpretive plaques on both sites inform visitors about the regeneration work and the dominant tree species. The project was promoted using flyers, direct communication by presentation to community groups, press releases, newspaper articles and newsletters.

outcomes now and in the future

Both forest remnants are now protected and rehabilitation work has made good visible progress. Volunteers planted over 700 native seedlings of 13 species in the Wetherill Park Reserve, and these have established well. Once the protective fencing was in place, the natural native seed bank started to germinate successfully and understorey grasses are now growing well. The reserve has been included in Council's long term bush regeneration program and will receive regular follow-up work. On the TAFE site, the



The Wetherill Park Reserve after revegetation, showing weaving garden

bollards will prevent vehicles entering regeneration areas and damaging the understorey plants.

Although it is difficult to measure community awareness, feedback from the educational session has been positive, indicating that local participants now have a greater understanding of the importance of the bushland. The project was well promoted, reaching a wide audience, and the signage will continue to educate visitors.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The bush regeneration officer from Fairfield City Council assessed the project to be an overall success, achieving its goals of protecting and rehabilitating the two remnants of spotted gum forest. The working bees for the Wetherill Park Reserve site were enthusiastically attended by members of three schools, a youth group, the local Rotary Club and local residents. The education session, although well planned, was poorly attended. Many potential participants from TAFE reported clashes with the timing of end of year activities.