

RESTORING LAND RESTORING CULTURE

overview of the project

This project by the Warada Landcare Group aimed to provide an outdoor learning centre and hands-on environmental education program for students of Bonnells Bay Primary School and the wider community. The site has good quality Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus haemastoma*) and Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*) forest. A program of planting and restoration was undertaken to enhance this area of remnant forest.

The project was driven by the local Aboriginal community and strived to deliver an Aboriginal perspective on environmental education. It provides an ongoing resource to educate students and the community about the environment, biodiversity, bush food, natural resource management, and best practices.

The project has resulted in the strengthening of partnerships between the local Aboriginal community, the school, environmental groups and the wider community which has helped to break down barriers and increase cultural awareness as well as delivering successful environmental education and restoration outcomes.



New plantings and remnant bushland

how the project was carried out

The project commenced with a series of community consultation and cultural workshops which allowed for the promotion of Aboriginal people and culture in a positive way and allowed opportunity for community input to the project. The consultation was very successful as it allowed the opportunity for people with skills to come forward and assist the project.

Students, teachers, parents and community members participated in 10 days of tree planting with a total of 8150 planted on site over the duration of the project. The school and community also joined forces to participate in clean up days, mulching days and working bees.

An outdoor learning environment was created through the construction of four kilometres of bush tracks, installation of benches for an outdoor classroom, establishment of educational learning points and the preparation of educational kits for teachers. One of the most enjoyable learning resources developed during



An educational learning point

this project is a frog pond where students learn about the life cycle of frogs, local threatened frog species, and the Dreaming Stories of Tiddalik the Frog.

outcomes now and in the future

The school has hosted field days for local Landcare groups so that they can view the project and take away ideas that they could use in their own community. In partnership with Landcare the school has commenced a Junior Landcare Group in which students participate during lunch times and one weekend a month, teaching

students about the project with a focus on changing behaviours and sustaining the outcomes of the project.

Warada Landcare has gained a lot of recognition and opportunities through this project to work with other organisations, schools and environmental groups.

The group has increased their experience in grant writing, implementation and monitoring of environmental projects to the point where they are now able to assist other groups in planning and incorporating Aboriginal perspectives into their projects.



Students at the Frog Pond

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

One of the biggest challenges was to involve the community in a way that was engaging and educational. The strong Aboriginal focus of the project created a sense of ownership, empowerment and decision making by the Aboriginal community.

Changes in school staff and volunteers created minor continuity issues for the project however these were addressed by additional meetings and training. Heat and humidity were sometimes an issue for both workers and the maintenance of new plants.

Students at the school, the wider community and environmental groups have gained a greater understanding and value of indigenous culture as a result of this project. Partnerships have been formed and strengthened to ensure sound environmental education with a sustained Aboriginal focus.