



Discovering Landcare Conference 2006 – Evaluation Report



Captain Catchment and Ballandean State School students

The event

The Discovering Landcare Conference took place in Toowoomba on Monday, 16 and Tuesday, 17 October. It was held at The Church of Christ Hume Ridge Centre, a large multi-purpose venue that allowed a number of different learning activities to run simultaneously.

Objectives

The conference aimed to:

- allow students the opportunity to share the results and experiences of their work on environmental projects undertaken at their respective schools over the course of the year. And through sharing their projects inform and inspire their peers.
- engage and inform young people about a range of environmental issues through fun and interactive activities and consequently instigate positive behavioural change.
- encourage teachers to incorporate environmental education initiatives into their teaching program.

Numbers

A total of 326 delegates attended the Discovering Landcare Conference. This figure included both the student and teacher quotient. Participants were drawn from 21 schools. There was strong representation from rural and regional schools and some groups traveled long distances to attend the conference.

The tally of technical and expert support and presenters that assisted in the running of Conference activities amounted to over 60 helpers. These people were drawn from a range of industries, government and non-government departments and various organizations such as The University of Queensland, CSIRO, Department of Natural Resources and Water, Toohy Forest Environmental Education Centre, Toowoomba City Council and Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.



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Activities on offer

A variety of student activities were offered by technical staff. Many centred around the theme of water. Activity topics included:

- Salinity
- Weeds and pests
- Recycling
- Catchment and river health issues
- Habitat issues
- Being waterwise
- Indigenous catchment care perspectives
- The Great Artesian Basin
- Erosion
- Sustainable energy

Excursions were also a feature of the conference. The delegates travelled to two locations, Cooby Dam and Gunningurru Cultural Heritage Site where a variety of activities occurred such as:

- cultural heritage tour
- water quality tests
- macro-invertebrate sampling
- riparian vegetation assessment
- nature photography
- bird surveying
- environmental sculpture
- weeds and feral pest investigations



School of Total Education students,
Making ochre at Gunningurru



Surat State School students studying
waterbugs

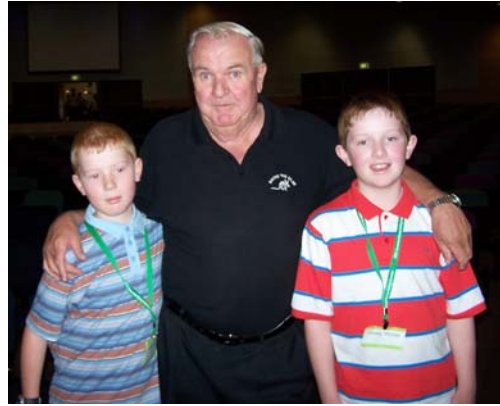


Clifford Park Special School students making a Sugar Glider box



Speakers

Key note speakers opened both days of the conference and provided inspirational talks for delegates. Speakers included Frank Manthey (Bilby Brothers), Narelle Oliver (children's author), Ranger Tim Moore (Totally Wild) and Delphine Bentley (North Australian Pastoral Company). Councillor Sue Englart presented students with their awards at the awards dinner on Monday evening.



Frank Manthey with Crows Nest State School students

Media and Publicity

The Conference attracted coverage in the following publications:

- The Chronicle
- Highfields Herald
- Crow's Nest Advertiser
- Stanthorpe Border Post
- Warwick Daily News

Channel Ten ran a story on the conference, interviewing students, teachers and organisers. Radio coverage included a number of interviews on ABC Southern Queensland, and 4GR. Mention of the conference was also made in many school newsletters.



Murray's Bridge State School students with Conference satchels



Sponsorship

Sponsorship support was derived from a number of sources and attracted a range of financial and in-kind contributions. Major support was provided by Heritage Building Society, Queensland Water and Land Carers and Toowoomba City Council. The

The following organisations also helped by providing in-kind support: Toowoomba City Council, Natural Resources and Water, The University of Southern Queensland, CSIRO, Bunnings Warehouse, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative, and Toowoomba State High School.



Cr. Sue Englart and Murray's Bridge State School students at the awards dinner



Evaluation

Student and teacher evaluation of the Conference was overwhelmingly positive. A formal organisational evaluation including input from teachers and presenters will be undertaken in early November. Anecdotally and in collected response survey forms, delegates were impressed with the range of activities, the quality and passion of speakers and the ideas presented in the student-led environmental projects presentations. Many have expressed an interest in attending next year's conference. Some of the comments provided are outlined below:

Teacher comments

"It was a fantastic day. We all enjoyed it!" Janice Mulhare, Christian Outreach College

"Thank you for a great conference. My students have really enjoyed the whole experience. Well done!" Lee Reushle, Crows Nest State School

"Congratulations again on a wonderful conference. It was certainly well worth us travelling down for it. The students really enjoyed it and got a lot out of it. Thanks again for all your help!!" Jane Carmichael, Surat State School

"We had a great time at the conference, the kids are still talking about it. The hands on activities were just great for the kids and very appropriate to their level of interest and understanding. We were all really impressed by the bag full of goodies and I can't believe how you did it for the price." Libby Clapperton, Nanango State School



Student Comments

"I enjoyed the activities because they were both educational and inspirational." Emma Batten, Warwick SHS

"I enjoyed learning about what goes in our rivers and seeing animals that I have never seen before. I learnt heaps of stuff today." Hannah Beitz, Mitchell SS

Presenter Comments

"I'd just like to let you know how much I enjoyed myself yesterday. I felt it was a very worthwhile activity. All the children were interested, enthusiastic & well-behaved. I had some very nice feedback. Congratulations to you for organising such an event. I think the children will have got a lot out of it." Lesley Beaton, Birds Australia

"Could I compliment you and your team who put together what was a very professional and engaging collation of exhibits and activities." Darren Shepherd, Principal, Toohey Forest Environmental Education Centre

Conclusion

In terms of fulfilling the above mentioned objectives, the collected surveys and observations made throughout the event indicate that these aims were comprehensively met. QMDC is proud to have been able to provide this environmental education opportunity to students and teachers across Queensland. We gratefully acknowledge the support, both financial and in-kind, of all sponsors and assisting organisations. Assistance provided with presenting activities and providing expert advice was also invaluable. Finally we would like to acknowledge the inspiring group of students and teachers who made the conference such a success. It was truly encouraging to see so many committed and passionate individuals.



Murray's Bridge State School students searching for waterbugs



Kindon State School students painting stories of the catchment