

Collaborations

NSWLP-011-R046

Connecting adolescents with nature and each other



Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc

A new project is connecting young people with nature, with benefits for biodiversity, mental health and social connection

The issue

Time in nature can provide many benefits to young people, and can positively influence their mental health. However adolescents typically spend far less time in nature than either younger children or adults.

In parallel, emerging research has noted the conflicting impacts from the benefits of connecting with nature and the realisation that the natural world is under threat due to the impacts of climate change and other human-induced actions. This phenomenon, labelled "climate grief", can include anxiety over the future in terms of loss of nature, frustration over the lack of dedicated action from successive governments at an international scale, and fear that these problems are bigger than an individual can solve themselves. All of these emotions have a negative impact on the mental health of young people.

The solution

Our new project aims to create a safe space where small groups of adolescents can spend time in nature to connect with the natural world and each other. These meetings will also allow young people to make a positive contribution to the restoration and enhancement of remnant areas of native vegetation through plantings and other restoration works.

Through a partnership comprising environmental educators, Landcare volunteers, youth mental health services and members of the Wiradjuri community, we aim to engage the adolescents in work that creates positive change for the local environment, in a way that also empowers them and is self-directed. The participants will provide guidance and decision-making around the direction of the project, with opportunities to focus on art, science, mindfulness, connection to Country and other areas of interest.

The impact

We are working with four groups of students, initially focussing on children coming from a trauma background and/or those with existing mental health issues. We have connected with several local high schools, who have all been extremely keen to share this opportunity with their students.

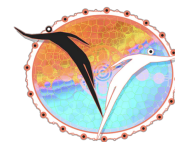
Following an initial pilot stage, we will expand the project to invite students who have aspirations of becoming environmental change agents or climate activists, with a view to tailoring their experiences to support their development in these roles within the community.



Key facts

- A unique project, linking nature connection and mental health
- Diverse partners providing a range of skills
- Targeting adolescents, a key group often absent from Landcare groups & activities

Project Partners



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