

Small schools - Big impact

Eastern Riverina Landcare Group

A series of Landcare Gala Days with small rural schools are engaging kids in Landcare and NRM, and connecting the schools with their local environment

The issue

Small rural schools often struggle to be able to offer their students interesting learning opportunities, due to the logistical issues and costs associated with getting experienced presenters to the school. As a result, kids at these schools may miss out on these valuable experiences, which can have a big impact on their awareness of, and interest in, topics which are outside the standard teaching curriculum.

The solution

With the help of a grant from Riverina Local Land Services, the Eastern Riverina Landcare Group, Petaurus Education Group and Murrumbidgee Landcare have combined to develop an exciting and engaging Landcare Gala Day format which can be delivered to local schools in a simple and effective process.

The events are held at a local nature reserve or Travelling Stock Reserve, with the students travelling by bus to the location. Students are divided into 3 or 4 groups, and then participate in a series of round robin activities, covering topics such as native plants, endangered fauna, water bugs, bush treasure hunt, indigenous art, live reptiles, tree planting, nest boxes and indigenous stories. Each activity is led by one or more facilitators from the 4 partner organisations.

The main costs involved in the Gala Days include bus hire (to transport the students to/from their schools), portaloos and the cost of external presenters. Students bring their own morning tea and lunch, to eliminate this cost.

The impact

The positive impact these events have on the students and teachers from the schools involved cannot be overstated. The educational experience for students is interactive, engaging and specially designed to be locally relevant. Feedback from students is always incredibly supportive, with students and teachers regularly pleading with us to run it again next year!

There are also flow-on benefits for teachers, parents and the wider school community. The NRM knowledge and experience which our presenters have is able to be shared with teachers, helping them to continue to build on the students' education at school following the events. In addition, students are encouraged to share details of the days with their families, helping to spread the Landcare ethos throughout the wider community.

Practical environmental education at a young age can provide a spark to drive children's future studies and careers in natural resource management. The long-term beneficial impact of this on these children, their communities and our local environments is immeasurable.



Key facts

- Number of Gala Days (so far!) = 4
- Number of schools involved = 9
- Number of students involved = 357
- Number of teachers involved = 25

Project Partners



The Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative Program that enables the promotion of these case studies on the Gateway, is funded by the NSW Government and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW

