



Project update February 2014

Responses to the Murrumbidgee Landcare schools survey were limited, with Natural resource management (NRM) considered in a minimal way. It appears that the teachers who responded do not have a great deal of knowledge of “l”andcare (care of the land) or “L”andcare (the grass roots organisation). The MLI school project with your help plans to improve this situation.

Facilitation of a range of resources and events through the schools project, as mentioned below, will help achieve this, but at the same time, schools need to have a clear definition of both little “l” landcare and big “L” Landcare e.g. Big “L” page ii *Teachers Resource Guide -Landcare in Your School and little “l” the landcare activities chapter*. <http://www.juniorlandcare.com.au/resources/teachers-resources>

There is great information in this document, but it is far too long and would overwhelm any teacher. Consider separating chapters and put a link to the relevant ones on the schools page MLI website. The Landcare activities chapter could be very useful if modified to include specific local issues and activities (e.g. details relating to specific weeds etc). The addition of local Landcare case studies would also be beneficial. Note: Landcare in Western Sydney have already set a precedent for adapting this document to suit their requirements.

Most schools survey responses referred to the development of vegetable gardens and worm farms (EG Stephanie Alexander gardens). These projects are relatively easy to get funded, and provide succinct information packages. The packages include all necessary resources, from the benefits of the program, making it easy to convince the school principal and parent community to support the project, to set by step how to guides, simplifying establishment of the project. One of the main concerns of the responding schools, was the ongoing maintenance/watering of the gardens particularly during holidays.

MLI will respond to this issue immediately by providing information on the MLI website, in the resource links created for the Environmental Events Calendar, e.g. water saving tips <http://www.savewater.com.au/how-to-save-water/in-the-garden> or how to build a self watering wicking bed. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GLK2DdrtTk>

Food production is obviously of interest to the schools, but MLI need to build on this to link to larger scale production. Maybe MLI could consider supporting schools to use some of their garden beds, to plant a mosaic of locally produced agricultural products, eg Lucerne, phalaris, canola, wheat, oats, native pasture species etc, supplying a kit including: seed, establishment guidelines, and possibly informative garden labels. From this, students would be able to identify what is growing in local paddocks and facilitate school activities around crop and pasture production. Various agricultural industry bodies have fact sheets and other educational resources that MLI could source and make available in kit form and/or on the web. E.g.

Cotton Australia-

http://cottonaustralia.com.au/uploads/publications/Outreach_education_lesson_plan_3-6.pdf

Target 100- <http://www.target100.com.au/Tips-resources/Sustainability-study-guides>

CSU's Super Market Botany <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/grahamcentre/education/>

Schools also expressed an interest in developing bush tucker gardens in school grounds highlighting local edible native species. This could be supported with links to existing native plant and animal resources on the website fostering an interest in native species. This resource would also be beneficial for Land carers. MLI might also consider providing or directing schools to local reference sites.

There is a definite focus on school ground based activities due to the complexity of off site visits. Because of this I would like to propose that MLI create their own virtual farm visits with willing local members. E.g. <http://virtualfarm.mla.com.au/> This could be the first point of contact to their local Landcare group, possibly leading to future school excursions.

Teachers also expressed a keenness to communicate with like minded teachers and participating in combined events. Consider an annual event facilitated by MLI? Eg

Story writing competition and presentation workshop? (resources available)

<http://www.envirostories.com.au/stories/story-books/2013books-1>

School Property planning competition? (resources available, could include property visits)

<http://education.brgcma.com/index.php?page=ppc-teachers>

Creating a Vision for Healthy Productive Landscapes competition?

(resources would need to be developed could include property visits)

http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/solutions/advance-sustainable-agriculture/healthy-farm-vision/

Additionally a *Landcare in our Town* poster competition will be held (resources to be developed).

The magnetic Environmental Celebrations Calendar for 2014 has been created and will be posted to schools by the end of February. MLI have a number of additional copies for Landcare groups to distribute.

I would appreciate any feed back on this document and any other ideas you may have, in the next couple of weeks!

Regards

Toni McLeish

Project Coordinator

Murrumbidgee Landcare Schools project

Joining the Dots: connecting kids, schools,

Landcare and farming communities

Ph 0419400309

schools@murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au

