



2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Nominee: Gilroy Community Sustainable Gardening Project, QLD

Category: Woolworths Junior Landcare Team Award

Gilroy Santa Maria College's Ranger Program began in 2013 as a way to replant and re-establish trees that were destroyed on the grounds of the school during Tropical Cyclone Yasi in 2011. Since then the program has expanded to a range of other activities that aim to reclaim previously unusable areas of the school – with the establishment of vegetable gardens, composting areas, a greenhouse nursery, a fruit orchard and an outdoor entertainment area that incorporates key aspects of our district's Indigenous heritage. Through ongoing engagement in these projects, students have gained a valuable insight into how they can play their role in managing and sustaining the natural resources of the school, as well as those of their own farming and home environments.

One of the greatest attractions of the Ranger Program is its practical component and the on-ground activities that students have the opportunity to engage in each week. So far the students have transformed an unusable swamp area into a native tree plantation, established a garden and nursery on top of a previously unworkable compacted road base platform, and constructed an outdoor entertainment area/indigenous space – inspired by a national park picnic precinct – on a poor draining area. The ongoing maintenance of these areas also provides the students with opportunities to implement new ideas and concepts associated with land management. These include; grafting fruit trees and natives, planting of herbs and other natives for use in the school's food technology classes, and finding new and innovative ways to use mulch in various projects within the school.

During yearly Indigenous cultural week activities, Year 7 students study the school's rainforest area, investigating the many trees that were once utilised by Indigenous people for food, shelter, healing and medicinal purposes. They also contribute to the sustainability of the rainforest, planting a range of local native trees within this space. Members of the Ranger program have used their skills to build an Indigenous Garden area at a local primary school. In this project, the students worked with primary school students and staff to landscape and plant a range of trees and shrubs that were distinctly native to the area. The students also created seating and spiritual areas that were aimed to connect with the local Indigenous tribes of the Nywaigi, Banjin and Warragmay people.

Through the Ranger Program, students have had the opportunity to complete a Certificate I in Conservation and Land Management and gain a range of hands-on skills associated with horticulture, gardening, landscaping and revegetation projects. In 2018 the Ranger Program has been upgraded to a Certificate II, providing students with increased knowledge on Land Management practices as well as a more defined pathway in future employment initiatives associated with the environment. Staff and students associated with the Ranger Program regularly have the opportunity to engage with local park Rangers to gain a more industry-focused understanding of key aspects of land management and environmental factors that are currently being practiced by National Park representatives.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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Funding projects is an ongoing challenge, but so far the school has been able to overcome this obstacle through small grants and donations. It has also encouraged the students to find creative ways to use their own resources and establish their own supplies. This has resulted in the Ranger Program creating their own mulch and using it as a fertiliser replacement, propagating plant stock in the school nursery and replacing sprinklers with drip irrigation to conserve water. In an exciting addition to the program, the Ranger unit has been approached by the district's Kindergarten to create a "Bush Tucker" precinct and an Indigenous inspired pathway.

Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2016 National Landcare finalists, visit www.landcareaustralia.org.au

Ends

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Web Summary

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