



Water Works

Three Way Bridge - Cultural Awareness Park

The Three Way Bridge Cultural Awareness Park was first considered in July 2007 when members of the Griffith Indigenous community approached MI with a plan to turn a degraded, weed-infested parcel of land into a park where the community's children could play safely and learn about their cultural history.

The Indigenous community designed the park around a gugaa (goanna) as the centrepiece of the park, with the gugaa's belly transformed into an amphitheatre storytelling area. A boomerang-shaped shelter provides shade over a BBQ, a large grassed area provides a place for a game of cricket or touch footy, while interpretive signs throughout the park highlight the history of the Three Way Bridge community and its many families.

Pathways throughout the park guide people through a myriad of bushtucker gardens and all plants within the park are local native species with a special Wiradjuri significance including food resource; tools and implements; medicinal uses; for carrying food or water; for shelter; or for spiritual or ceremonial activities. The plants will be used in the education of the local youth and broader community about the importance of these traditional resources.

As the park neared completion, a tree-planting day was held on Friday 13 November which attracted over 60 children and adults. Three Way Wiradjuri Elder, Dulcie Tompkin, planted the first tree, *Eucalyptus blakelyi* and was assisted by Griffith Public School children in watering it. Other schools and families selected their own site to plant which they will now nurture and maintain. On Thursday 19 November, the Wiradjuri preschool enjoyed planting their garden and over the next few weeks other community groups and schools including the Men's Working Group have planted their own garden which they will look after.

The official park opening will be held in early 2010.

Biodiversity planting incentives

Do you want to plant native vegetation on your farm? Incentives are available for plants, planting and fence materials and help is available for planning and species selection. For further information phone Bonnie Lessels, MIA EnviroWise, on 6962 0200.



Pasture Cropping and No Kill Cropping Workshops

MI is offering the opportunity for landholders to participate in a two-day course called Introduction to Pasture Cropping and No Kill Cropping on March 2 and 3, 2010 to be held in Wellington.

What is Pasture Cropping and No Kill Cropping? Pasture Cropping and No Kill Cropping are land management systems that involve the planting of an annual grain or oilseed crop into an existing perennial pasture (native or introduced). The systems mimic the natural functionality of grasslands, with the crop and grasses complementing each other.

Both systems provide opportunities for low risk cropping whilst maintaining and enhancing perennial pastures for grazing livestock.

Course presenters: The course will be delivered by two of the following practitioners, all of whom are experienced presenters and trainers;

- Col Seis (codeveloper of Pasture Cropping),
- Bruce Maynard (No Kill Cropping developer), and
- Angus Maurice, experienced practitioner of both systems.

All are Central West NSW farmers/graziers who have extensive practical experience in the implementation of these techniques for both production and land rehabilitation purposes.

Provided to attendees:

- Comprehensive course manual and supporting reference materials, including electronic version of financial template,
- Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea on both days, and
- In-field discussions of landscape function and the implementation of both systems.

Course Cost*: \$550 (GST inclusive) per person and full payment prior to the commencement of the course is required. Closing date for registration is 1 February 2010.

Accommodation*: approximately \$80 per night.

** This course is a FarmReady Approved Training Course (FRTC 0221). This means that eligible landholder participants may be reimbursed for the total cost of their attendance (course cost, accommodation and meals) through the Federal Government's FarmReady Program. Visit www.farmready.gov.au for full guidelines and eligibility criteria.*

Travel Costs: In addition Murrumbidgee Irrigation will cover the travel costs.

Numbers will be limited to twenty so apply early to avoid disappointment.

More details can be found on the Murrumbidgee Irrigation website or ring Kerri-Anne Keely on 0427228492 or email keelyk@mirrigration.com.au

The Three Way Bridge Cultural Awareness Park has been planted with local native plants which have special significance to the Wiradjuri people. The photo at the top of the page is of the amphitheatre which forms the shape of a goanna from the air.





Water Works

Taronga Zoomobile's visit to Griffith

MI co-hosted the Taronga Zoomobile visit to Griffith between 20 to 22 October. The event was organised by the MIA EnviroWise team and is part of the larger National Threatened Species Day celebrations. Over 400 local primary school students visited MI's Hanwood Business Centre and had the opportunity to get up close and personal with some native animals including a snake, baby possum, frog, lizards and an echidna. The activities were organised to heighten the awareness of the importance of taking care of the environment so the number of animals and plants facing extinction can be reduced. Educational activities and games were held throughout the day. Feedback from teachers and students who attended was very positive, with many children enjoying the day's activities whilst learning much more about our native flora and fauna as well as current ecological issues affecting our area.

"A very good day - well organised, diverse activities, very hands on, and very closely link to the curriculum. I quizzed the kids on what they learnt the following day and was really pleased with the amount they had taken in. Very well done!!!"
Natalie James, Principal - Rankin Springs Public School.

Another event organised by the MIA EnviroWise Education Team during October, was the celebration of National Water Week. A lift-out feature in the Area News and the Irrigator contained a large amount of information to encourage protection, rehabilitation and improvement of water environments such as channels, creeks, wetlands and waterways. The objectives of the newspaper feature were:

- To increase awareness and knowledge of water in the Australian community (food production) especially the MIA. Without water there would be no community in the MIA,
- To promote school and community involvement in water education,
- To increase awareness of the importance of different flora and fauna in the area, including endangered species, and
- To educate the community on the history and the aboriginal cultural heritage of the MIA.

Educating the next generation is a key strategy of the MIA EnviroWise Education program. By engaging young students now when their fascination and curiosity with animals and their surrounding environment is high, they will carry this knowledge and appreciation into their adult life when they become our region's community leaders.



School children enjoyed being able to touch the native animals from the Taronga Zoomobile.

Modernisation

MI is calling for Expressions of Interest (EOI) to assist in planning for on-farm activities under MI's Modernisation Plan to help deliver a long-term sustainable future for Murray-Darling Basin irrigation communities. We are currently finalising our funding submission under the Commonwealth Government's \$650 million NSW Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators (PIIO) program, announced earlier this year. If funding is successful, MIA landholders may be eligible to access partial funding for on-farm projects through a staged program over the next 4-6 years.

Eligible on-farm projects may include reconfiguring irrigation layouts, adopting new technology or installing new infrastructure for improved water efficiency, storage or delivery. The PIIO Program is an addition to the \$300 million On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program (OFIEP) that is supported by MI and other local businesses. Landholders who completed an EOI earlier this month for the consortium, including Ricegrowers' Association, High Security Irrigators - Murrumbidgee, Riverina Citrus and Wine Grapes Marketing Board, are not required to submit a separate EOI for the PIIO \$650 million Program. An EOI form and a fact sheet with more information are available from the MI website or from the MI offices and should be returned by Monday 4 January 2010.

Plant Profile - Wallaby Grass -

Wallaby grasses (*Austrodanthonia spp*) are amongst the most valuable native grasses in pasture lands in Australia due to their excellent grazing value, persistence, palatability and productivity in natural pastures.

White Top Wallaby Grass features in native pastures in the Riverina and is a densely tufted perennial grass 20 - 90cm tall that has fine leaves and fluffy white seed heads. This adaptable grass grows year around, providing green 'pick' during summer and is highly drought tolerant, tolerant of acid soils and responds to fertilising and grazing.

Found in a range of plant communities and soil types, but more on clay soils, Wallaby grass has a very useful whole-farm role for livestock production. Grazing management is important for the development and maintenance of more productive native pastures. One strategy is to increase stocking rates and winter/spring grazing pressure to prevent annuals from dominating and potentially smothering summer growing wallaby grass. As composition and condition of native grass species vary with seasons, an understanding of the growth cycles can help achieve pasture, livestock and conservation goals on your property. Seed can be sown by broadcasting and using light harrows in spring or autumn. Coverage should be no deeper than 3mm and reliable moisture is essential.



The mature seedhead of Wallaby Grass.

Wallaby grass provides many environmental services to an ecosystem including providing excellent habitat for birds and reptiles, food for seed eating birds and butterfly larvae and is a useful cover for the prevention of erosion. These grasses are superb contrast plants in native landscaping, highly drought and frost tolerant and extremely water efficient.

For more information on Wallaby Grass or native tree and shrub species contact Cathy Semmler, MIA EnviroWise Vegetation Implementation Officer, on 02 6962 0200.

