

Wimmera 2007/08



Monitoring Information

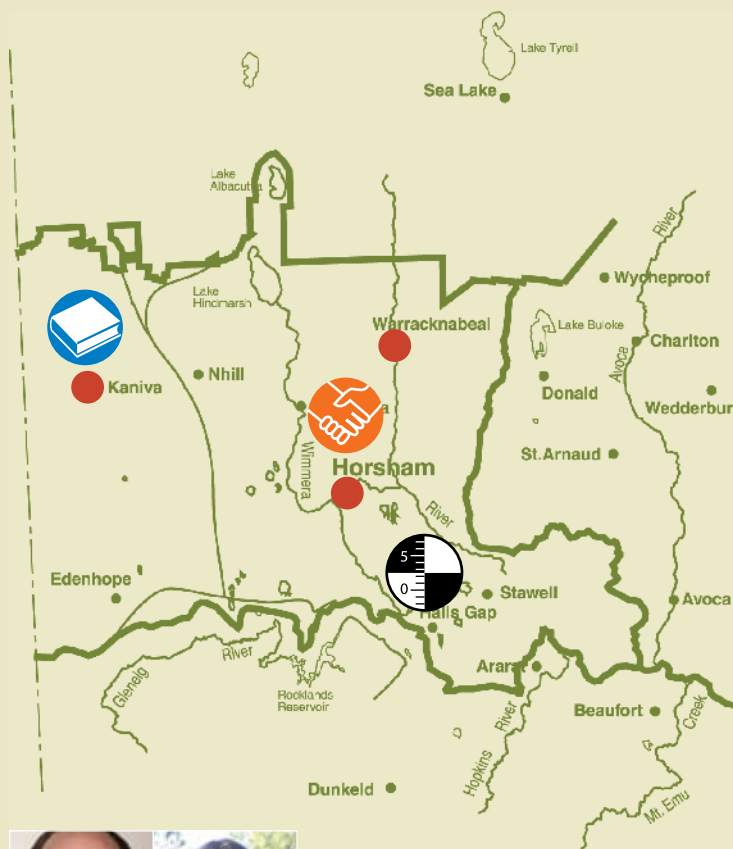
136 groups, 133 participants, 157 sites

Education Participation

6,705 participants

Coordinators (FTE) 4.2

Program Budget \$600,000



Waterwatch Coordinators



Kate Rhook



Jeanie Clark



Harvey Champness




Leigh Blackmore



Bronwyn Bant

Drought hasn't dried up Kaniva's learning opportunities

 Students at Kaniva College may not have seen a lot of rain in the past few years, but they love their very own wetland on the school campus.

Constructed in early 2007, the 100 metre long wetland (built in a series of three adjoining catchment dams) is an invaluable learning experience for the young students, plus a chance to wear their gumboots!

Funded by the Australian Government's Community Water Grants, water is captured from nearby stormwater drains and diverted into the wetland.

The wetland has become a 'whole-of-school' project with students from Prep to Year 12 involved in hands-on learning activities.

Students enjoy carrying out research, planting trees, shrubs and aquatic plants, monitoring water quality and a whole range of other set-up tasks.

Students started Waterwatch monitoring of the wetland in March 2007, measuring water quality and aquatic macroinvertebrate biodiversity monthly. In the future, the school hopes to monitor the town's wetlands for comparison purposes.

According to Harvey Champness, West Wimmera Waterwatch Coordinator, the wetland is a great resource for student study.

"Students can conduct water quality testing, learn about wetland treatment systems and macroinvertebrates, and the wetland is also a back-up water reserve for school grounds and the school farm," he says.

Wimmera Community Waterwatch has also made use of this natural resource to help consolidate their existing activities and programs into more regionally focused delivery of catchment and environmental education sessions. Kaniva College assists by sharing its new wetland with other schools in the Wimmera.

In October 2007, a successful macroinvertebrate training day was held for Year 7, 10 and 11 students with visiting teachers and students from Nhill and Edenhope Colleges.

Students learnt sampling techniques in the wetland and honed classification and identification skills back in the laboratory. By aligning their education program with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, Wimmera Waterwatch Coordinators make sure these local schools can achieve curriculum outcomes through their activities on the wetland.

The aim for the future is for the other two schools to regularly return to Kaniva College and undertake sampling and training activities at the wetland. The Year 7 Kaniva students will go on to mentor primary school students in learning about water bugs.



The Kaniva College wetland is a great learning resource for the school's students and for students from other schools in the Wimmera region.

'Tree change' to the Wimmera



Fond childhood memories of swimming and fishing in Mt William Creek and the surrounding serenity of the Grampians were responsible for Andrew Davidson's 'tree change' from Melbourne to begin a landscaping business in the Wimmera.

Andrew's strong connection with Mt William Creek and passion for the environment has led to his keen interest in waterway health.

Andrew joined Wimmera Community Waterwatch about 12 months ago to regularly check the water quality of the creek about one kilometre from where he lives.

Andrew tests the water quality at three sites along the creek, where a series of deep pond chains has formed due to low rainfall; a natural ephemeral system.

"It's not unusual to see the odd kingfisher or yellow-tailed black cockatoo nestled in a tree hollow or darting around the riparian vegetation," Andrew says. "It's hard to imagine that these sites were once used to produce thriving market gardens and tobacco crops."

During a recent sampling, Andrew said a noticeable number of red gums had dropped

limbs in an attempt to survive the tightening grips of drought.

Andrew says being part of the Wimmera Community Waterwatch network has increased his knowledge in the specifics of water quality.

"Playing a practical part in the monitoring of the health of our waterways is one of the most rewarding aspects of being involved in the program."

Andrew is one of 62 community monitors who have been actively contributing to a comprehensive study on salinity across the region since 2006.

The monitoring data is sent to the Bureau of Rural Science (BRS) in Canberra and is forming part of a Murray-Darling Basin Community Sampling Project.

"The Community Stream Salinity Sampling (CSSSM) outputs will assist catchment management authorities, farmers, communities, and government agencies to identify areas at risk from salinity by providing comprehensive and comparable data on sources of salt within the Basin," says Kate Rhook, Wimmera Regional Waterwatch Coordinator.



Wimmera Community Waterwatch monitor Andrew Davidson tests water samples near Mt William Creek.

"Playing a practical part in the monitoring of the health of our waterways is one of the most rewarding aspects of being involved in the program."



Watery characters from the 'Fresh & Salty' DVD.

"The 'Fresh & Salty' DVD project is an innovative mix of science and art."

Science and art educate and engage



Successfully communicating science is a difficult task. Sometimes a creative approach can be the way to go.

A unique partnership between the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority's Wimmera Community Waterwatch (WCW) program and Regional Arts Victoria has produced an educational animated film about salinity.

The 'Fresh & Salty' DVD project is an innovative mix of science and art. It is helping WCW to get across the message about the increasing problems caused by salinity on land and in waterways.

The project was a collaboration between the Wimmera CMA and local artists – animator, Dave Jones; puppet maker, Mary French; and trainer animator, Hannah French.

Kate Rhook, Wimmera Regional Waterwatch Coordinator, says the final film and DVD are beyond expectation.

"Through creative animation and humour, the eight-minute film captures people's imagination, both young and old, helping them to understand the importance of salinity issues across the Wimmera and throughout Victoria."

The community launch of 'Fresh & Salty' was held at the end of National Water Week 2007. To celebrate the launch a river critter competition was run for Wimmera primary students to try their hand at animation creations. The schools launch was held at the Wimmera Kids conference in November 2007 and copies of the DVD were distributed to all schools in the region.

The 'Fresh & Salty' characters were also incorporated into the Wimmera CMA's latest media and advertising campaign. In the style of the short animated TV series 'Creature Comforts', the animated models were coupled with the voices of local people interviewed at the Wimmera Field Day answering the question "What does the Wimmera's waterways mean to you?"

"The 'Fresh & Salty' film and the Wimmera CMA ads connect people back to their river and demonstrate a changed approach to communication, needed to engage people under our current difficult climatic and social conditions," maintains Kate.