

Creative Catchment Kids
in the Murray Region
2011 - 2017

Evaluation Report



This report has been prepared by Petaurus Education Group and supported by Murray Local Land Services through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Research was conducted by PeeKdesigns education consultants and independently reviewed by Christine Bottrell PhD, REDthreads Research, Evaluation and Development.

COVER PHOTO: Burrumbuttock Public School students with landholders, Keiran and Louise Keenan, interviewed in the 2016 Creative Catchment Kids program (Manifeasto Photography).

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**Local Land
Services**



**National
Landcare
Program** 

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Executive summary

This report on the Creative Catchment Kids (CCK) program between 2011 – 2017 was commissioned by Petaurus Education Group (PEG). Data was collected through document analysis, survey and case study development, with the survey designed and analysed by PeeKdesigns. Anecdotal evidence has been assembled at stages over the delivery of the program and has been woven through the more formal evaluation design. The analysis of data collected from participants involved in the program across the Murray region in southern Australia highlights the importance of the CCK to successful learning and teaching and adds to the body of evidence regarding the educational and social value of hands-on- projects, place-based in nature.

Evidence from across the range of participants – students, educators and community members – indicates that CCK is a teaching and learning program with impact, which has connected communities, young people and adults with the environment, and each other, in unique ways. The sustained interest in and growth of the program over the past decade demonstrates the relevance and resourcefulness of CCK. Initially designed to build engagement between Murray Local Land Services (LLS) and students from the Murray region, the program has expanded geographically as well in content and delivery. Originating as a hands-on, activities-based program in natural resource management into what is now described as a creative, systematic book-writing program which has hands-on activities, literacy and awareness of culture and the environment being central to the program model.

The experiential learning students are exposed to as they become involved in the research process, identify and problem solve nurtures success for young people and the program. The success is demonstrated through obvious votes of confidence from participants through to increased funding and sources. Anecdotal statements are supported by survey data that more subtle changes in participating student and educator perspectives and attitudes ripple out to families, peers and the broader community.

Some themes have been more popular over the past eight years and delivery has varied, however the strategy of focussing on a different environmental theme each year is identified as a strength of CCK by educators. Evidence from the survey combined with conversations with participants over the last decade demonstrate that participating in CCK provides the opportunity to meet diverse curriculum and cross-curriculum outcomes. Written and oral responses from educators, students and community members articulate evidence where general capabilities of literacy and numeracy; critical and creative thinking; ethical understanding; personal and social capability, and ICT capability are delivered. Responses to the survey and unsolicited statements provide evidence that involvement in CCK provides rich opportunities to address the cross-curriculum priorities of sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. Research indicates these are often difficult for teachers to address with confidence in their curriculum plans.

School-based educators state they are enabled to approach the program with the degree of flexibility required within their year-level and school structure. Creative Catchment Kids has evolved into a supported program with a long-term plan, which includes the development of

an extraordinary range of electronic and hard-copy curriculum material and resources. These resources are in demand due to their relevance to place, curriculum and individual school-site. Educators have also described the opportunity for the program to become a launch pad for future practice.

Through the development of CCK, intended and exemplary partnerships in learning and practice have been created. Teachers and communities have been connected with networks which have in turn expanded skills, knowledge and values. Recognition of the program from industry and government on the local, state and national stage, as well as from academics, identifies the innovative and entrepreneurial nature of the partnerships between education sectors, industry and government. Participants express they are well supported, extended and exposed to learning outside the school gates through CCK. Data analysis indicates there are further opportunities for larger-scale, community-based learning experiences in rural and regional areas.

Petaurus Education Group have based the CCK program in education research and many years of experience, and fully understand the need for structure as well as flexibility in the delivery of the program. Over 5,500 students have participated from more than 220 schools in the Murray region, and the reach beyond these schools extends nationally, through awards and workshops, and the impact of this is difficult to measure. From these participants over 270 resources have been developed, including over 170 books authored by students, which have been published for schools and libraries 11,000 times.

Reflection and potential as identified by participants in this evaluation are determined by place, context and community. Education exists in a busy environment where no time is considered ideal for additional tasks, such as implementing an external program which on the surface may appear to create more work, in planning, completing surveys or collecting student reflections. Owen Dunlop and Stacey Bell have taken on a significant challenge, covered a large geographic area and engaged students, schools and communities. Outcome data is very strong and as with all authentic learning programs rigorous evaluation provides opportunities for reflection and effective action for future growth.



PHOTO: Holbrook Public School launch their Travelling Stock Reserve brochure in 2017.

GROWING STRONGER

CCK is embedded in over 270 geographically diverse schools, and responses strongly support the quality and impact of the program. Policy and current public debate demand greater participation of students in STEM and the building of skills, knowledge and the values which are underpinned by critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and problem solving. This retrospective evaluation using artefacts and data from the last decade provides evidence schools and individuals who participate in the Creative Catchment Kids program experience a tailored program which involves all of the above. Attention to the following initiatives will acknowledge and build on the experience and research that underpins the effective structure and existing programming of Creative Catchment Kids:

Reporting

- Development of a standard reporting format and options.
- Revision of evaluation methods i.e. case study design, gathering of anecdotal evidence and survey design.

Delivery

- Develop a school-based marketing strategy.
- Consideration and development of a more flexible approach to school-site delivery.
- Consider development of Professional Learning accreditation within program delivery.

Resources

- Develop introductory digital resource for staff and students new to CCK.
- Resource development as a potential for revenue raising.



PHOTO: National Tree Day Planting activities help engage kids in supporting their local environment.

Introduction

Background

Creative Catchment Kids (CCK) began in 2010 with an aim to improve engagement between Murray Local Land Services (LLS) and school students across the Murray region. The program provides opportunities for positive, cooperative activities that encourage students to learn about natural resource management and agricultural issues.

The first two years involved students completing on-ground natural resource management activities including building nest boxes, native gardens and water quality monitoring. This was outlined in the School Natural Resource Management (NRM) Education Plan 2011-2013.

CCK introduced a book-writing program in 2012. This was based on the Enviro-Stories education program developed by education consultants at PeeKdesigns. Students were asked to research and write about catchment environmental, economic or cultural issues. The books were then professionally published for schools to use as readers. The program was a huge success as it was combining school and government priorities, encouraging links between schools and communities, demonstrating teamwork and leadership, identifying a wealth of local knowledge and celebrating local achievement.

DEVELOPING A LONG-TERM PLAN

In 2012, the former Murray CMA contracted the development of a new five year NRM Education Plan from 2013 to 2018. This plan built on the first three years of actions and achievements and was based on completing 16 annual targets under the following ten themes:

1. Management – planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting,
2. Curriculum resources – curriculum material, DVDs, resources for teachers, shared activity boxes, cultural heritage resources, etc.,
3. On-ground activities – Creative Catchment Kids, NRM events and celebrations,
4. Professional development NRM activities for teachers,
5. Enhancing catchment education network – ongoing support and enhancement,
6. Supporting student travel to visit sites of NRM significance,
7. Providing information – to LLS and other approved school-accessible websites
8. Catchment student support – including tertiary scholarship
9. Encouraging students to consider agriculture as a career
10. Tuppal Food and Fibre Festival.

Petaurus Education Group Inc. (Petaurus) was formed in 2013 to serve as the education and consultancy business of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. Petaurus and its staff now oversee all of the CCK project planning and implementation.

PARTNERSHIPS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Since those beginnings in 2010 CCK has grown from strength to strength as it has gained support from other agencies such as Western and Riverina Local Land Services, Office of Environment and Heritage, Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group, Murray Darling Basin Authority, Taronga Zoo and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Indigenous Advancement Scheme. The program is also supported by the Governor of NSW as well as state and federal ministers.

Key achievements of the program include:

- Winner of the 2016 Yates National Junior Landcare Team Award.
- Winner of the 2015 NSW Junior Landcare Team Award.

Presentations have been made at:

- 2013 Australian Association for Environmental Education Conference Melbourne
- 2013 World Environmental Education Congress, Morocco
- 2017 NSW Environmental Education Conference, Sydney



PHOTO: Stacey Bell with Joley Scott and Charlie Doig at the 2016 National Landcare Awards.

Evaluation process

This evaluation consists of three key components: data analysis, a qualitative survey of teacher participation and a series of case studies. The aim is to ascertain the impact CCK has had on the region and how both teachers and students have benefited through implementation of the program.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis reviews the outputs of CCK across the region. This is a desktop assessment based on evidence of participation, products and activities.

QUALITATIVE SURVEY

A survey of both past and present teachers who have participated in CCK. The survey gathered qualitative feedback that can be used to inform future projects and determine the success of CCK both as a curriculum model and as a student engagement and 'real-life' learning tool.

CASE STUDIES

Case studies have been prepared from past students and teachers. These will be used to showcase the impact CCK has on individuals.

“Creative Catchment Kids was definitely a highlight from all of my schooling – it was a really valuable experience.”

CHARLOTTE (AGE 17)

Data analysis

Summary

Data analysis identified numbers of individual students, teachers and schools involved in the program between 2011 and 2017; the number of workshops and community events as well as types and amounts of resources developed. This was achieved by reviewing past project final reports sent to Murray LLS (previously Murray CMA) made by Murray Darling Association (2010-13) and Petaurus Education Group (2013-17) and records kept by CCK Project Officers.

Over 2011-17, the results identified the following outputs:

- 5,504 participants (this includes students, teachers and community members)
- Accumulated total of 244 schools participated with an average of 35 individual schools each year
- 271 resources/activities were produced of which 179 were student-written booklets with almost 11,000 copies distributed across the region
- 223 workshops / small events were conducted.

All raw data collected is available in Appendix 1.

Topics/themes that were delivered over this time include:

- Natural Resource Management
- Box Gum Grassy Woodlands
- Biodiversity of the Murray Catchment
- Water in the Murray Region
- Catchment Champions
- Outback NSW
- Local Land Heroes – agriculture, sustainable farming, biosecurity
- Squirrel Gliders
- Pest in Irrigation
- Sustainability – energy and water
- Cultural Heritage
- Our Community – case studies on towns and communities
- Our Culture – Indigenous case studies
- Corroboree Frogs
- Rare and Threatened Species
- Landcare projects.

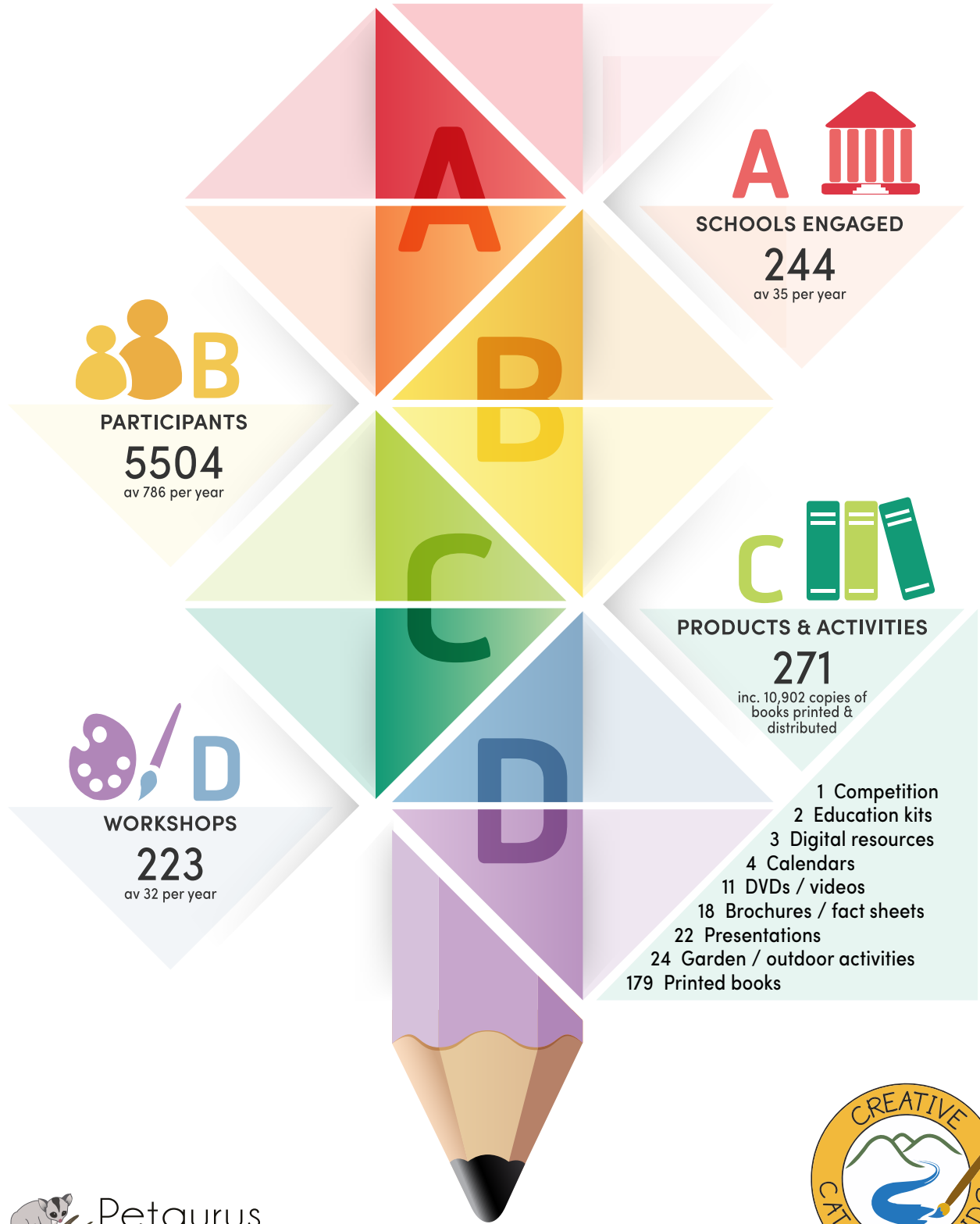
INFOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

To visually show some of this analysis an infographic was prepared for Petaurus to use as a representation of the CCK program's achievements (see next page).

2011-2017

Creative Catchment Kids

IN THE MURRAY REGION



Concurrent project funding

After the success of engaging schools during 2012, CCK has annually received concurrent funding from other organisations to run the program in other regions of southern and western New South Wales. These additional projects are usually based upon the same theme as the Murray region, but not always. Adding the additional schools, products/activities and participants to the Murray region's statistics increases the overall percentages reported on above. All these figures have been included in Appendix 1.

In summary, this adds value the Murray region's results to produce the following CCK results across all participating regions:



337

**SCHOOLS
ENGAGED**



8,356

PARTICIPANTS



368

PRODUCTS & ACTIVITIES

inc. 249 student-written books
with over 16,000 copies
distributed



314

WORKSHOPS

Data inconsistencies

There were some issues encountered when conducting the data analysis. Inconsistencies in availability of raw data became apparent as a result of changes to the format of reporting used by Murray LLS/CMA. In relation to events and participation a small number of totals in progress reports were not consistent with totals in final reports which has resulted in some minor anomalies. The data analysis for this evaluation is the most comprehensive summary that could be compiled from available documents - reports, emails, spreadsheets and working documents.

Quantitative analysis

Petaurus distributed a survey using Survey Monkey to current and past teachers who have participated in CCK over the seven-year period. The following information is the report prepared by PeeKdesigns education consultants who managed the survey and analysis.

Summary

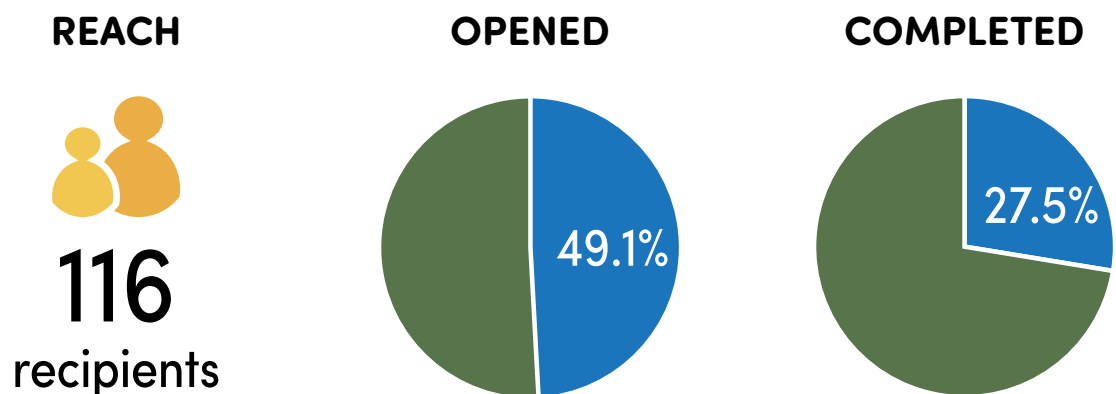
The survey was distributed on 26th February, 2018, to 139 educators who had previously participated in Creative Catchment Kids. Recipients were given 2 weeks to respond and no incentive was provided to complete the survey within the short the timeframe. No additional follow-up emails were sent out during this time.

PARTICIPATION

There were 82 (58.9%) recipients who did not open the email and 23 (16.5%) email addresses that bounced back the survey. The reasons for the bounce-back includes recipient emails no longer existing and the computers rejected the email thinking it was spam. Due to this bounce rate, the email effectively reached only 116 recipients.

Based on this email reaching 116 recipients, 57 (49.1%) recipients opened the email and 41 (35.3%) recipients clicked on the link to follow through to the survey. Only 32 recipients completed the survey, which give us a response rate of 27.5%.

The 27.5% positive response rate for a survey that was emailed to busy teachers in the middle of Term 1 was an incredible result. This shows the commitment of teachers to supporting Creative Catchment Kids.




SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

Interestingly, the highest school involvement was for 2013-16. These years involved students interviewing and connecting with members of their local community beyond the school gate. It is unsure whether this is a response of the program structure itself, the level of comfort teacher had in taking part in the program, or the funding available to target more schools. Nevertheless, this format seemed to prove popular with teachers.

One question that project staff were keen to know was whether the change of theme or delivery each year was a hindrance to teachers. All respondents were happy with the change and the time taken to complete the tasks assigned to their students. The most effective themes for the classroom were Local Land Heroes and Our Community or Our Culture in 2014-16 (this is also reflective of those years also being the top three for survey recipients and overall school participation). However, what is not reflected in the survey but was reported on by staff, was the total change in format for 2017 and reduced timeframes (due to unforeseen circumstances) did confuse some teachers and make others drop the program for the year.

A couple of respondents identified time as a problem. This is both class time for individual student participation and time to schedule and plan timetables in advance.



“Creative Catchment Kids provided opportunities to visit and explore different places and allowed students to hear presentations from experts in their fields.”

IMPACT IN CLASSROOMS

The type of impact, whether positive or negative, was not addressed through a fault in the survey design as the structure of a number of questions did not allow for detailed responses.

All respondents indicated that as a holistic education program, CCK has been appropriate for their classrooms and that it is supportive of their teaching and learning. After seven years of delivering CCK, Petaurus has refined the program, taken onboard anecdotal feedback from teachers and it appears to be a good model to keep implementing where practical.

Most respondents have participated in the book writing program, field trip activities to the Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and travelling stock reserves. Professional development sessions have also been conducted in schools by Petaurus staff. Having the option to take learning beyond the school gate is a high priority in today's classrooms and the respondents all agree that CCK is the best method they have available to them for authentic community engagement for both the students and the school as a whole.

When asked if any changes to the delivery of the CCK program where necessary, the majority of the seven responses were in-line with the issue around time or timing while other responses focused on including more support at different stages. Another repeating impact on classrooms has been the selection of only a few students from an entire class to participate in CCK. Respondents identified the pressures this puts on the students involved, teachers and remaining students. See recommendations for suggested improvements.

Teachers were very responsive in describing how CCK has supported them as a teacher. Some of the quotes included (see Appendix 2 for all responses):

This program made me step out of my comfort zone and encouraged the students to be more independent learners.

Gave me a springboard to launch into writing, gave real life experiences to the students to show the writing process.

Students engaged with community members in a safe, educational and engaging environment. Although the whole class projects engaged more students, the small group focus allowed me to direct the students and support the project more closely than whole class projects.

The program has given me more confidence to deliver environmental education in a positive way.

A wonderful program. Giving teachers information that students could use in their rooms very exciting. The financial support to publish our book was essential and allowed us to produce a top quality piece of writing from the students. the support that this program has offered has made project based learning a powerful tool in our classes. Also, the connections to people within the community with a wealth of information and abilities was welcomed in our school.

The program is significant. It is always very organised and enables us a class to follow up on a terrific introduction to the topic. Students are always thoroughly engaged as the topics are close are high impact for our region and are very important to us for a sustainable future.

PRODUCTS AND RESOURCES

As mentioned in the data analysis, around 440 resources have been produced through the implementation of CCK since its establishment. All respondents agree that these resources have been beneficial to their school and/or community. The following responses highlight how some of these products are being used (see Appendix 2 for all responses).

Books have been used for guided reading, and as a source of information about the community.

The books created by the children have been put into the school library, town library and the council.

The project we completed was received into our local community with a completion special assembly. We invited local press and made the local news and newspaper. The students were so proud and it made their learning relevant to their local area and culture.

The books are used during our ecology units with additional literacy resources being developed to support their use in the classroom.

Gifts to elders and family members.



PHOTO: 2013 book presentation at Deniliquin South Public School with His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), Governor of NSW (back right) in attendance.

Respondents were asked if there were alternative options for connecting kids beyond the school gate. There were a few responses that indicate that CCK doesn't need to modify their program but there were also the following suggestions:

- Videos that target the NSW Science, History or Geography syllabus
- Introductory video on CCK and the process to (A) promote CCK and (B) show new students what to expect
- Creating an index of community groups/members that schools can contact for further engagement opportunities
- Creating a larger-scale program that includes whole classes.

THE FUTURE

Teachers are very keen to see CCK continued to be delivered in the future. There are four pages of personal feedback message that respondents have written in Appendix 2 to back up the benefit of CCK to their school, their community and their students.

CCK has made a significant impact on students at our school and the impact has grown more each year that we have participated. Teachers are learning how to extract maximum learning/teaching moments out of the Project Based Learning style of projects that Creative Catchment Kids have instigated.

The benefits of this programme are outstanding in our local community. It gives the students the opportunity to learn about agriculture and the way so many people in the farming industry are caring for their environment and for the aboriginal heritage of the area. It also gives students an appreciation for these areas as well as an understanding of the importance of agriculture to their local area, economically, environmentally and culturally.

There is no greater opportunity for our students to become aware and involved in the activities and themes raised, thus providing them with the knowledge and exposure to these very relevant issues now and in their future. It is an ideal opportunity to create environmental responsible and aware future adults. The sustainability and preservation for future generations is in their hands. We must ensure they know, understand and can act in a manner that will benefit all.

My students are transient due to the employment of their parents. CCK gives them the chance to feel connected with this community through the investigation of an issue or person connected with the environment. It is an authentic opportunity to feel a sense of belonging.

“Creative Catchment Kids has benefited the children by providing skills in team building and group project work, knowledge of the local area and the ability to interact/communicate with a variety of different people – including other students, teachers and experts.”

JANE ROBB
LOWESDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT

Case studies

A number of past participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with the Creative Catchment Kids program. The following case studies are from three students and one parent. They were all asked the same three questions and their responses, unedited, are below.

Joley Scott: student

JOLEY'S INVOLVEMENT

Joley Scott attended Henty Public School and participated in the Creative Catchment Kids program in 2015. Joley and her fellow students wrote a book called 'Cindy's Beetles Beat the Flies', an account of how her mother Cindy uses dung beetles on their Angus cattle stud farm. Joley is now a year 9 student and reflects on her experiences with CCK.

"We learnt a lot about the different issues in the environment. We went on excursions to the Burrumbuttock nature reserve at Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre as a school, which I enjoyed greatly."

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

CCK helped me understand the ways that farmers affect their land. The writing of our book and speaking about it gave me more confidence in public speaking and working as a team. I also learnt about how books are made and published.

FINAL STATEMENT

I think the book writing program was wonderful because I learnt so much about the issue we were discussing in it. This program allows the children to learn not only about the topic but also about how it affects their local community.



Cindy's Beetles Beat the Flies, 2015
Henty Public School

www.envirostories.com.au/2015030-beetles-beat-flies/

Patrick Doyle: student

PATRICK'S INVOLVEMENT

I was part of the Creative Catchment Kids program in 2011 when I was in Year 5 and again in 2015, when I was in Year 9. In primary school I got to be involved with excursions to Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. I represented my school and visited places in Albury that I hadn't been to before, like a hike up Table Top Mountain.

In high school, I personally got to lead a group of five students to write and publish a book on an Australian pest - we chose blackberries. Not only did I get to improve my leadership skills and have the book archived in the Australian National Library, I got to learn more about how farmers deal with problems like weeds.

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

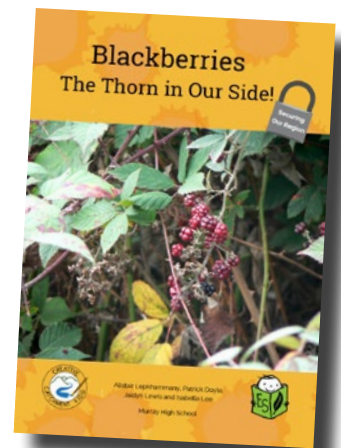
Creative Catchment Kids gives young kids an opportunity to learn about wildlife, to be representatives of the school and improves skills like communication and problem solving. I had a friend who had never touched a shovel or dug a hole in his life, but because of CCK he got to experience that, which shows that town kids need to know and experience more about the country.

Without CCK I never would have had the chance to be part of a team to write and publish something meaningful at such a young age. Students get to learn about a particular topic, plan what they're to write and are in control to write what they think is important, not some adult. I also met 'local heroes', the farmers who deal with blackberries as pests on their farms every day. We also had the opportunity to learn from the other student's projects targetting environmental challenges like fire, erosion and irrigation. Our books were later given to local school libraries to give

Blackberries - The Thorn in Our Side, 2015

Murray High School

www.envirostories.com.au/2015025-blackberries/



younger kids a deeper understanding about issues farmers face. By continuing this program, students have the opportunity to learn and grow individually because they are part of something meaningful and relevant to their local community. I am sure the skills I learnt during my CCK time contributed to me being chosen to represent my school and Country as a young Ambassador to Gallipoli in 2017 to help commemorate a very special ANZAC Day celebration.

FINAL STATEMENT

Young kids won't get the opportunities to experience nature through books or words on a screen. They need to be hands on with the experience as they get to touch, see and hear what's around them. The Creative Catchment Kids team are full of hard working, knowledgeable people that want to share their passion with kids. It's not just the kids that benefit from the experience, but their families, classmates and local community as well.

My family and I had never seen a squirrel glider, a beautiful, yet small nocturnal animal, which is like a possum that can glide. Through CCK, we and others from my high school got to see it fly over 20 metres from tree to tree, landing without making a sound. You can't just explain the experience of something like that. From that we built a box near a silver wattle tree at home and we even had a few squirrel gliders live on our property over the years.

Nessa Liston: student

NESSA'S INVOLVEMENT

In years 5 and 6, I was involved with Creative Catchment Kids. In this time period I went on a number of excursions and field trips to local farms, environmental centres (such as Wirraminna) and other schools. I was involved in a media production with Dr. Dave in which the students were able to get behind the camera in group and individual interviews. Henty Public School provided various opportunities through the Fiveways Reserve which allowed students to explore the knowledge we learned through CCK. I also participated in writing/illustrating a book - Sally the Superb Parrot.

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

Creative Catchment Kids enabled me to grow my communication abilities. Interacting with people of varying demographics in various situations prepared me for the real world. The program is important for primary school students as it inspires a love of the environment and demonstrates a connection to the land that many people would be without if not for CCK. Learning about threatened species and humanity's impact on the environment encourages kids to become responsible for their actions and promotes a sustainable way of living.

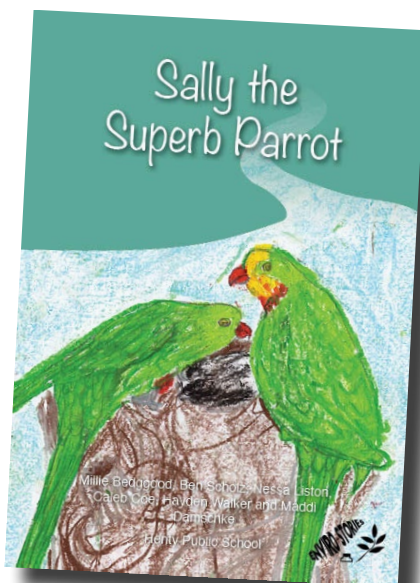
I was involved in producing a book called Sally the Superb Parrot. I found this a valuable experience as a number of us worked together to research the context for the book. A team effort was maintained to produce the illustrations of the book. We managed to include a previous art teacher Mrs. Ellis in our book as she sparked our interest in the environment at a young age. By creating a book, we were able to express our ideas and creatively interpret our local environment.

FINAL STATEMENT

Creative Catchment Kids is an important program as it positively influences kid's view of the environment in a crucial stage of their lives. CCK helped me gain a deeper understanding of the environment and the repercussions of one's actions on the planet that we live in. We all have a role to play in the Earth's ecosystem and therefore need to contribute to the preservation of it. CCK is an eye-opening experience that teaches primary students valuable life lessons and includes them in the future of our environment.

Sally the Superb Parrot, 2012
Henty Public School

www.envirostories.com.au/2012048-sally-superb-parrot/



Cindy Scott: parent and landholder

CINDY'S INVOLVEMENT

All three of my children benefited from the Creative Catchment Kids program while at primary school. The first two were involved in book writing and in the case of the second child, my husband and I as local landowners were involved in helping explain the book's subject matter, that being the dung beetles we released on our property and the benefits they bring to the environment. The book writing included visits to our farm by the students to interview us. We and the kids found it to be a wonderful and memorable experience.

In addition, my daughter Joley and another student were asked to represent their school and the Creative Catchment Kids program at the National Landcare Awards night in Melbourne. I was fortunate enough to be able to accompany her, and the evening at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre was a night to remember! Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre won the Junior National Landcare award for its incredible Creative Catchment Kids program.



PHOTO: Charlie Doig and Joley Scott meet Costa Georgiardinis at the 2016 National Landcare Awards.

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

From a parent's perspective, I believe the program has been invaluable in educating students about the environment. There is an assumption that just because a child lives in a rural environment that they have knowledge and awareness about good environmental practices. In my experience this is not the case, as this is a learned skill that needs to be taught. CCK creates environmental awareness while making learning fun. In our own case, CCK has validated our good environmental practices on the farm in the eyes of our children, such as our tree planting program and dung beetle releases. Through the CCK they have also learned about threatened species in our area which has made them more aware and interested in the fauna on our farm.

I believe the book writing is a fantastic program as having one area of focus allows the students to explore and learn more deeply about that subject. Not only do the students grow in their awareness of the environment, but the books also provide an opportunity to learn skills in the process of putting a book together: interviewing and communication skills and writing and editing skills. The students found the process very rewarding.

FINAL STATEMENT

Staff at Wirraminna and Petaurus are absolute 'Legends of Landcare'. Their passion for educating and sharing with children their love for the environment has had a lasting impact on many children growing up in the local area. I hope to see the program not only continuing into the future but spreading to a wider audience.

Growing stronger

Petaurus is committed to making Creative Catchment Kids a stronger and better program for our teachers and students. We will take on board the feedback provided throughout this evaluation process and make recommended adjustments to the delivery and recording of data in the future. The following outlines the actions we will undertake within the capacity of our staff and our supporters.

Action	Area	Description
1A	Evaluation and Reporting	Introduce standard internal reporting process (with evaluation embedded)
1B		<p>Consider standard options and milestones for gathering evidence through duration of program.</p> <p>PEG acknowledged the survey of participating educators 2010-2017 the response rate was high and credible considering short turn around and timing requirements. There are times of the year that are less busy, where educators have developed deep relationships with students and have less demands made by reporting, extra-curricula activities and planning.</p> <p>Revisit the existing survey delivery i.e. timing, length of response time and use of email prompts. Alternately, incorporate the survey into the delivery of the program which then becomes a part of the evaluation. This allows teachers to consider their actions and responses throughout the delivery of the program. Email prompts to be sent throughout the program at designated milestones designed to maximise response rate and collection of data. at significant or identified stages.</p>
1C		Build on the existing formative nature of evaluation and continue to collect anecdotal evidence through recordings and artefacts from each of the CCK sites.

Action	Area	Description
1D	Evaluation and Reporting	<p>Review Case Study Design</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting the material Joley Scott with Cindy Scott and providing a community and educator perspective from the same location would create an excellent reporting model. 2. Expand the Case Study method to include perspectives from all groups participating in, and impacted on by CCK: community (including industry and business), government, students and educators.
1E		<p>Standard design for collection of site specific artefacts to be integrated into formative evaluation</p> <p>Consideration of a structured reflective journal (for educators and students) to be part of the CCK program. As a teaching and learning tool, to provide artefacts for data gathering and resource development. Completion of the reflective journal could be an Option for Professional Learning with NESAs accreditation for educators, and as an assessment strategy for students.</p>
1F		<p>Review structure of seven questions in the survey. Responses were largely positive however, a number of questions allow for yes/no response only, which limits data available for analysis. Responses using a rating scale will provide specific reflection and richer data related to factors such as program structure, level of teacher confidence or funding available. There are seven questions in the survey which could be re-viewed and re-framed.</p>

Action	Area	Description
2A	Delivery	Advertise of CCK programs at beginning of each school year. Potential for a save the date at end of school year.
2B		More flexibility in CCK group constitution and size. Option for educator or schools to nominate whole class groups or larger multi-age groups, negotiated on a needs basis.
2C		Option for NESA Professional Learning accreditation for educators who participate
3A	Resources	Develop resources for new educators and/or students e.g. introductory video or podcast describing the structure of CCK and potential for delivery
3B		Consideration of revenue raising through sale of resources developed through the program



Dear Owen

I am currently employed at Monash University in Melbourne as a lecturer. My work in teacher education has included developing and delivering units focussed on Literacy and Integrated Curriculum in primary school and units related to Pedagogy, Engagement and Assessment for secondary disciplines.

During a recent search for a research project I found web-based texts for the Petaurus Education Group Creative Catchment Kids Project. We were very interested to look at these given our work on engaging reluctant readers and writers. You must be thrilled with the impact your work is having on so many young writers and their teachers. I would love to talk to further about this work.

Have you thought of publishing for some journals? This approach needs to be known more widely, especially given the recent concerns with the National literacy NAPLAN results. Engagement is what our young learners need desperately and your attention to providing authenticity to their writing is a valuable part of that work.

Regards,

*Jane Kirkby
Lecturer, Monash University*

7th March, 2018

Appendix 1: Data analysis report

Murray Community Education Program

YEAR	PRODUCT / ACTIVITY TYPE	PRODUCT / ACTIVITIES	PRINTED	SCHOOLS	PARTICIPANTS
TOTALS		485	10902	244	5504
2011	Books / Booklets	9		34	128
	PowerPoint	19			
	Competition	1			
	Garden / Outdoor	24			
	Signs	1			
	DVD	2			
	Event	20			486
2012	Books	44	3080	40	147
	DVD	1			
	Event	23			354
2013	Books	43	1920	32	182
	Education Kit	1			
	DVD	1			
	Event	74			768
2014	Books	36	2160	36	155
	iBooks	3			
	DVD	4			
	Event	36			155
2015	Books	27	1620	27	121
	Education Kit	1			
	DVD	1			
	Event	20		27	296
2016	Books	20	1000	20	
	Newsletter	1	150		
	Handout / Certificate	1	20		
	Website				
	Event	29			2125
2017	Books				
	Calendars	4	250	4	
	Poster	5	250	3	
	Brochure / Fact sheet / Handout	17	452	4	
	PowerPoint	3		1	
	Video	2		2	
	Event	21		14	587

Concurrent Creative Catchment Kids funding

YEAR	PRODUCT / ACTIVITY TYPE	PRODUCT / ACTIVITIES	PRINTED	SCHOOLS	PARTICIPANTS
TOTALS		188	5160	93	2852
2013	Books	10	60	10	62
	Education Kit				
	DVD				
	Event	10			62
2014	Books	15	900	15	70
	iBooks				
	DVD				
	Event	15			70
2015	Books	30	1800	30	172
	Education Kit				
	DVD				
	Event	16			404
2016	Books	28	1680	26	746
	Newsletter				
	Handout / Certificate				
	Website	2			
	Event	26			746
2017	Books	12	720	12	520
	Calendars				
	Poster				
	Brochure / Fact sheet / Handout				
	PowerPoint				
	Video				
	Event	24			399

Other concurrent CCK funding has been provided by Riverina, Western and South East Local Land Services, Murray-Darling Wetlands Working Group, individual preschools and through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Indigenous Advancement Program.

Appendix 2: Survey responses

Survey introduction message

After seven years, Owen Dunlop and Stacey Bell (nee Staunton-Latimer) have designed and implemented the Creative Catchment Kids (CCK) program across the Murray Riverina region. During this time, CCK has engaged around 3000 students, produced 440 resources/activities, distributed over 13,000 printed student-written publications across the region and coordinated hundreds of workshops and celebration events. Needless-to-say, CCK is deserving of the 2016 National Junior Landcare Award.

Current funding arrangements for CCK has come to an end and we've been asked to seek feedback through a simple evaluation survey. Your comments will be used to build a case that will keep the program running across the region. All responses will be reported on and used anonymously and no personal details will be shared.

All it takes is 10 minutes of your time to answer 15 questions and stand-up to support our award-winning program. It wouldn't be possible without you!

Survey questions & results

1. Which years were you involved with Creative Catchment Kids?

- 2011 – Aussie Bush 7 / 21%
- 2012 – Biodiversity of the Murray Catchment 13 / 40%
- 2013 – Catchment Champions 18 / 56%
- 2014 – Local Land Heroes (sustainable agriculture) 23 / 72%
- 2015 – Local Land Heroes (pest management) 22 / 68%
- 2016 – Our Community, Our Culture 22 / 68%
- 2017 – Our Culture, Wetlands, Community Land & Water 10 / 31%

2. Creative Catchment Kids has regularly changed the theme of its program delivery. Have you found the change useful?

Y: 32 / 100% N: 0

If not, please explain.

It ensures that smaller schools who may wish to be involved in multiple programs, have a new focus.

3. Has there been sufficient time for students to participate in CCK each year?

Y: 30 / 94% N: 2 / 6%

If not, what changes would you suggest?

A longer period of time to research and write the book would have been useful. It would be good to have initial briefings at the very start of the year, so that work could be timetabled in - teachers usually have entire terms mapped out after the first couple of weeks.

The main difficulty is providing time at school as it is only a small group that is usually involved in the program and this is not always easy to integrate into the class program.

4. **Rate the effectiveness of the annual themes based on their suitability as a classroom activity.**

Year	Very effective	Effective	Mildly effective	Not effective	N/A	Blank
2011	9	3	0	0	8	12
2012	12	3	0	0	5	10
2013	18	3	0	0	5	6
2014	21	3	0	0	2	6
2015	23	2	1	0	3	3
2016	20	3	0	0	5	4
2017	14	0	0	0	7	11

5. **Rate the level of impact the CCK program has had on:**

	High impact	Moderate impact	Little impact	No Impact	Don't know	Blank
Your teaching	19	13	0	0	0	0
Your students	30	2	0	0	0	0
Your community	16	13	1	0	1	1

6. **Has the delivery of CCK been appropriate for your classroom?**

Y: 32 / 100% N: 0

If there could be changes made to the delivery of CCK, what would they be?

Just a longer time frame as explained earlier - even signalling the theme at the end of the year before would allow time to research and select a topic.

Finding time to work with the small group of selected students within the school timetable was very difficult. They needed lots of support and I found it hard to do this. Having the program run so a whole class could participate might have been a better way to manage it.

Additional support in the writing/collating phase would help students in our area (Deniliquin).

More field work and even greater connections to community.

Maybe some temperature checks throughout the term, perhaps a group VC to share our topics,

where we re up to, tap into a wider audience for brainstorming.

Yes but, being able to work it across the whole class would have been more effective. Though the field trips and visits as well as receiving the publication is always a delight and well received by the students.

More classroom visits by CCK staff they are great.

7. **Select the CCK activities you have been involved in?**

- Book writing 32 / 100%
- Field trips 23 / 71%
- Small grants 5 / 15%
- Wirraminna visits 15 / 47%
- Other 4 / 12% (activity days, visits to school, professional development, Gum Swamp)

8. **Does the CCK program support your teaching and learning?**

Y: 32 / 100% N: 0

9. **Describe how the program supported you as a teacher or how could we do this better?**

Assistance with resources and ideas when requested

This program made me step out of my comfort zone and encouraged the students to be more independent learners.

Teaching children how to research, interview strangers, write, edit, write, edit, use computer programs to produce a quality finished product. They had to use all the skills they'd been taught for a specific purpose.

The scope to write in both a fiction and poetry genre goes well with my teaching of text types. Children also develop skills in researching, interviewing, making notes, creating text from their research and notes, photography, illustrating and public speaking.

Gave me a springboard to launch into writing, gave real life experiences to the students to show the writing process

Provided an important local and regional perspective for our students and school community

Assistance with sourcing information for the book topic, guidelines for setting out the book, opportunities to undertake field trips, funding to be able to produce a quality finished product.

The program provided authentic and meaningful stimulus by giving an interesting topic to work from. Students really enjoyed the visits from Stacey and Owen to scaffold them. I found Stacey and Owen's encouragement and generosity with their time a huge help.

Students were able to participate in all aspects of book creation

Students engaged with community members in a safe, educational and engaging environment. Although the whole class projects engaged more students, the small group focus allowed me to direct the students and support the project more closely than whole class projects.

The focus on Literacy guided my teaching and help individual students in their own learning.

The program allowed me to develop a curriculum based on our community and local environment. By doing this, we could capitalise on local knowledge and use the immediate surrounds for investigations. We were also privileged to launch our books at the Henty Machinery Field Days.

The program has given me more confidence to deliver environmental education in a positive way.

The program provided a vehicle in which literacy could be driven in a hands on and practical way. It allowed students to take their knowledge and understanding gained in the field and bring it back to their writing in the classroom.

A wonderful program. Giving teachers information that students could use in their rooms very exciting. The financial support to publish our book was essential and allowed us to produce a top quality piece of writing from the students. the support that this program has offered has made project based learning a powerful tool in our classes. Also, the connections to people within the community with a wealth of information and abilities was welcomed in our school.

Made more aware of community issues.

Personal contact from Owen and Stacey has been invaluable both electronically and in person.

The hands on, interactive nature of Creative Catchment was a valuable teaching tool for me and a fabulous learning tool for the students involved.

It helped board the students knowledge and understanding with in environmental education as well as the local community

An amazing authentic writing activity supporting so many English outcomes, as well as many other KLAs. CCK incorporates all aspects of the writing process, from research and drafting, editing and changing, collaborating and sharing, re drafting and re editing, and finally producing a quality text that has been officially published! There is no better opportunity.

Stacee & Owen were easily contactable for assistance and support. They organised a field trip day, which linked with a local university, so that students could check Squirrel Glider boxes and observe a researcher collecting primary information about a glider. Stacee & Owen were organised, had prepared resources to guide the book writing activity, were easily approachable and had a clear purpose for our book and the activities which built towards writing it.

By Stacee providing the expertise to get things done and with her input in how to achieve outstanding publications.

The program is significant. It is always very organised and enables us a class to follow up on a terrific introduction to the topic. Students are always thoroughly engaged as the topics are close are high impact for our region and are very important to us for a sustainable future.

Greater awareness of our local environment.

It gives an authentic writing purpose, provides students with enhanced self esteem through being published, enhances all students knowledge of environmental issues and local identities and groups who are supporting our environment.

Excursion support, access to experts who are passionate and experienced in topics that most teachers are not.

10. **We pride ourselves on connecting kids with their community beyond the school gate. Is CCK the best method for achieving this?**

Y: 32 / 100% N: 0

11. **Are there alternative options that you could suggest we incorporate?**

Not that I can think of.

I have not been involved in the past couple of years, however I would like to see some videos made and shared amongst schools that incorporate the NSW Science, History or Geography Syllabus.

Perhaps developing a index of community groups or members that schools can contact to assist with getting a closer interaction with the community and students. The index will of course have to be specific to each year's focus.

In-school visits to promote

Not really. You do a very good job

Maybe think about creating a short movie that can be used as promotional material as well as informing kids on how prior CCK projects have connected with their communities, to plant the seed of creative ways to connect.

The value of this program was in the small group size with a great field trip to value add to the book writing activity. The difficulty was only being able to implement with a small group, which in a high school setting became time intensive during recesses, lunches and outside school hours to have the book written and edited. So, it would be good to have a larger scale program, however, this option could be detrimental to the impact it had on the small group vibe.

No not really

12. **Have the resources produced through CCK (such as books, activities and DVDs) been beneficial to the school and/or community?**

Y: 32 / 100% N: 0

If so, explain how they have been used?

Books have been used for Guided reading, and as a source of information about the community.

The books have been used for reciprocal reading activities in classrooms and for individual readers.

The books have been used by other children in the school as examples of published writing, they are also found in the local information centre.

The books created by the children have been put into the school library, town library and the council.

Reading groups, writing examples, HSIE & Science

To inform wider community, to consolidate students understanding and to assist them in becoming proactive in the topics and issues raised as part of CCK

Students accessed books created in past years - gives them a sense of what they can do

We have used materials provided in lessons with both the whole class and the selected students. The final books have been a great classroom resource for reading and other areas.

We have sent books to the local library, the vet clinic (we wrote a book about the local vets) and our school library. Students have the opportunity to take these home as a part of our home reading program.

The books are made available in the school library. The current 2/3 class are using our 2016 book to assist with their Geography unit this semester.

Books have been used in class as resources and highly valued by students.

The books have been great! Having Owen and Stacey attend the school to deliver workshops proved very beneficial

We have utilised the Wirramina Centre to provide students with a look at how traditional lands can be regenerated and how ecosystems can be brought back to re-purposed land. Having access to previously developed reading material has provided students with great examples of text that were created by other students. Not only are they informative but provide encouragement to participating students as they too, write their books. I have utilised Owen as a point of reference when seeking resources or personnel to run my own programs within the schools that I am working.

The project we completed was received into our local community with a completion special assembly. We invited local press and made the local news and newspaper. The students were so proud and it made their learning relevant to their local area and culture.

Classroom Literacy activities.

Used to support and extend learning

Placed in the library for students to borrow and use when looking for information on the local community

To support the process

The books are used during our ecology units with additional literacy resources being developed to support their use in the classroom.

Gifts to elders and family members

Books and posters are used in the school and are well received by all students. The book about our town has been picked up by the Hume Shire and may even be used by them. A terrific resource for students.

Used for interest and sometimes as class readers.

They are a reading resource for students, all students have engaged in the activities and one book we wrote has been used for a variety of purposes in the community to enhance the knowledge of the Wiradjuri culture.

As classroom readers, promoting the school, connecting to community, improving confidence and skills of students

13. **Do you want to see CCK being delivered in the future?**

Y 31 / 97% N: 0 Blank: 1 / 3%

14. **Would you want to participate annually or biennially?**

- Annually 23 / 72%
- Biennially 8 / 25%
- Blank 1 / 3%

15. **You have the power to help keep CCK going. Please write a statement that we can take to funding providers that encourage them to keep funding CCK.**

CCK is a unique way to connect students to their community. They go to places and gain information that they never otherwise would. The personal contact with wonderful role models in the community is invaluable.

CCK has been instrumental in allowing the students to learn more about the local area - something they don't get a lot of in the newly changed curriculums.

CCK has provided our students with the opportunity to learn more about their local area and their culture in a hands-on, fun way.

CCK has made a significant impact on students at our school and the impact has grown more each year that we have participated. Teachers are learning how to extract maximum learning/teaching moments out of the Project Based

Learning style of projects that Creative Catchment Kids have instigated.

The benefits of this programme are outstanding in our local community. It gives the students the opportunity to learn about agriculture and the way so many people in the farming industry are caring for their environment and for the aboriginal heritage of the area. It also gives students an appreciation for these areas as well as an understanding of the importance of agriculture to their local area, economically, environmentally and culturally.

There is no greater opportunity for our students to become aware and involved in the activities and themes raised, thus providing them with the knowledge and exposure to these very relevant issues now and in their future. It is an ideal opportunity to create environmental responsible and aware future adults. The sustainability and preservation for future generations is in their hands. We must ensure they know, understand and can act in a manner that will benefit all.

CCK is a program which enables the students to see literacy in a real world situation in creating a book that has been student researched and produced for a wide audience. The program also gives the students a greater insight into environmental issues of their area and encourages them to consider the future of our country.

CCK is an invaluable program that supports both Literacy and Science and Geography teaching outcomes for students. It provides an authentic and meaningful stimulus to connect students to people, services and groups within their community and enhance their understanding of how we interact with each other and the land. Students are encouraged to explore a number of different topics or themes that are important to sustainable catchment management. As they develop their awareness and understanding of

the complexities around these themes they also learn about the people in their communities that are working in these areas. In doing so, students also understand that they have a role to play as well. Becoming authors of a published book provides an engaging and authentic means for them to communicate their understandings. I highly recommend this program be continued and if possible expanded.

Through participation in this fundamentally valuable program, my students have connected with individuals and groups in our community. All students involved link their knowledge of Literacy and other Key Learning Areas to the physical world around them. This is a beneficial program that connects, sometimes disengaged students, with a love of learning and practical knowledge.

The CCK program has allowed me as a teacher to create learning based on our community and our surrounds. We have used the opportunity to invite guest speakers to our school in order to gather relevant information. The program has allowed us to connect with the stories of original inhabitants of our area. This has been vital to our school because there are no descendants of the Wiradjuri people living in our community. The program has highlighted environmental needs and successes and to this end, it is essential that we can continue the program.

CCK has been very well received at Humula PS. As a small rural and remote school it brings with it activities that the children can access that they might not necessarily have access to without CCK.

The program is unique in the way that it connects students to the community and environments by allowing a hands-on approach. However, the programs real strength is in providing the opportunity for students to apply their knowledge learnt in the field back in the classroom literacy programs.

"The CCK program has been an extremely worthwhile program at our school. We were able to visit the Wirraminna Centre. Our students were absolutely engaged in this program. The learning was exciting and gave the students a sense of pride in their region and the local culture of The Wiradjuri people. The program is run very professionally and the staff are always willing and eager to assist in any area we asked. This included meeting with our staff, facilitating staff to work with local agencies and encouraging excursions and guest speakers to our school.

The staff are a pleasure to be around and obviously very passionate about this program.

Most importantly I watched with pride as my students achieved more than they ever thought possible and learned at a deeper level than they dreamed of. My students were beaming with pride and couldn't wait to tell their families and school community about their new knowledge.

I hope that with further funding our local schools can continue to benefit from this wonderful program in the future!

CCK is a fantastic opportunity for students to engage and think about the community beyond the school gates.

Creative Catchment Kids is valuable to our students and community as it tackles authentic issues and gives validity to our study of the environment and our local communities. The resources produced are of high quality and students and community members feel their efforts have been valued.

The work is relevant for the students as it helps them connect and learn about their own community and then hopefully preserve it for the future.

The loss of CCK leaves a huge hole - the kids looked forward to it every year and the end product was always of a high standard and something the students were proud of creating. The delivery of the program by Owen and Stacey was exemplary in every way and integrated well into many areas of the curriculum.

As an Instructional Leader I'm always talking with the children about how writing needs a purpose and CCK gave the students a purpose. Our book was launched at the Henty Field Days and this had an amazing impact for our students.

CCK has been incredibly beneficial to all of the students I have taught. Some of these students perform better outside of the classroom with hands on activities and the CCK program has helped open up their world to new experiences and education.

There is no better program that we have implemented in our school in terms of connecting with community, providing a sense of identity and pride, working collaboratively and producing a quality piece of authentic literature, all while achieving many learning outcomes for students.

The CCK program involved engaging a small group of students in meaningful, localised environmental research. Our students were linked with local university researchers and local environmental agencies, in our case the Office of Environment and Heritage, to better understand a specific occupation or environmental issue. The research involved field trips organised by Owen & Stacey from the CCK program which allowed students an opportunity to collect contextualised, primary data which was then used within the book they published. The CCK program provided the backbone, funding, organisation, purpose and support to make this book writing program a success.

CCK is a vital resource for our area. Sustainability and learning about our environment and local landholders is vital to keep our towns viable and the Murray Darling Basin healthy well into the future.

Being able to assist kids to connect with their local environment is paramount to creating interest, responsibility, a caring attitude and hopefully some skills and knowledge to promote the sustainability of our world.

My students are transient due to the employment of their parents. CCK gives them the chance to feel connected with this community through the investigation of an issue or person connected with the environment. It is an authentic opportunity to feel a sense of belonging.

The books are so well professionally published and the program is so unique and inspiring.

