

Jim's Block on the Darling



Emma Strachan, Georgia Strachan,
Lexi Litchfield and Harry Strachan

Palinyewah Public School



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners and school students by providing opportunities for positive, cooperative activities that encourage students to learn about and respond to, natural resource management and the importance of agricultural production.

wirraminna.org.au/petaurus/creative-catchment-kids/

Petaurus Education Group

Petaurus Education Group identifies, develops and delivers a range of learning and curriculum experiences, resources and initiatives for schools and community groups to connect with land, water, productive farming, sustainability and cultural issues at the local level. The group was established by Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre in late-2014 to support its operations and education activities.

wirraminna.org.au/petaurus

Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeekDesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

envirostories.com.au

Western Local Land Services

Established in 2014, Western Local Land Services delivers agricultural advice, natural resource management, biosecurity and emergency management in western NSW. Western Local Land Services is proud to support the Creative Catchment Kids book series. The program gives school students the opportunity to learn about natural resource management issues and engage with their local community. We hope you enjoy this book and promote it to your friends, family and community.

western.lls.nsw.gov.au

Jim's Block on the Darling

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Teacher: Debbie Francis

School: Palinyewah Public School

Land, Water & Community

In 2017, students from western NSW involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about their local community. These stories highlight actions that local community members have taken to look after their land and water resources for conservation, agriculture or cultural heritage purposes. The program was generously funded by Western Local Land Services and the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Creative Catchment Kids - Land, Water & Community is part of Enviro-Stories, a PeeKdesigns education program.



Jim Porker moved to Ellerslie in 1957 when he was two years old after his dad bought a block as part of the soldier settlement scheme. The block was 22 hectares or 55 acres. Jim lived in Ellerslie with his parents, two older sisters and one younger brother.

Jim went to Palinyewah Public School in 1960. For high school, Jim went to Mildura Technical School. He lived at his grandparents' house because there weren't any buses or other types of transport to travel to the school from Ellerslie.



Palinyewah Public School 1963 – Jim in middle row on right



Jim's first job was picking oranges at another property in Ellerslie. He worked at Beaurepairs Tyres for four years, then as a farm manager in South Australia for 18 months. Jim returned to the Ellerslie area and worked as a farm manager. He started farming his own land in 1982 when he bought the block from his parents. Jim's wife, Kay, works with him on the farm.



At first, 12 hectares or 30 acres was planted and the rest was left as bare land. It was possible to make a living from just 12 hectares back in 1982, but over the years, prices for crops were going down so they had to develop more farming area. They developed the whole 22 hectares then bought more land from another settler in Ellerslie. Their son, Andrew, and daughter, Tamie, have properties in Ellerslie as well. Now there are four blocks which make up about 65 hectares or 160 acres altogether.



Jim's first box of citrus

The Porkers used to grow a lot of vegetables and fruit like lettuce, pumpkin, watermelon and rockmelon. Growing the vegetables and fruit helped them to buy the equipment needed to add sprinklers to the farm.

Now they mostly grow different types of oranges and wine grapes all through the year.



Packing citrus today



The Valencias and late-Navel oranges are picked in the warmer weather. The mandarins and navels are picked in the winter. In late summer and early autumn the grapes are harvested.

Their produce goes to many countries – with the Asian countries being their main buyers.

“China now buys all of our produce. We will often have people come to visit our farm to see what fruit we are able to grow for them,” said Jim.



Jim waters once a week in summer. If it is very hot he gives the plants a small amount of water during the week. Jim tries to water on the weekends as he can use off peak power. Off peak power is less expensive and is also better for the environment because the power companies can run their machines all the time without having to stop and start them.

“Our power also comes from the hydro-electricity scheme – using water to make power is more environmentally friendly,” said Jim.

A water license is needed to pump water. There is a limit to the amount of water you can use. The Porker's have a license to use up to 350 megalitres.

"We have to order how much water we want each month to make sure there is enough water available," said Jim. "We are very lucky here because we get water from both the Murray and Darling rivers. We pump directly from the river using an electric pump."





Improvements have made the machinery used on the block more efficient and let the Porkers work faster on a larger area of land. The newer machinery also uses less fuel.

The weedicide machinery is calibrated regularly which means less spray is used. This is better for the environment. Spraying is done more quickly, saving a lot of time and man power.

Originally all grapes were harvested by hand. Now it is done by machine. Oranges are still picked by hand. Machines are also used now to prune the citrus and grapevines.





Drip irrigation is now being used. The drippers are under the trees. This is better because it uses 50% less water. "This is good for the river flow and natural environment, and also saves our power costs because we are pumping less water," said Jim.

"The improved irrigation system means we use less fertiliser and chemicals which is better for the environment. We can give the crops exactly what they need when they need it so none is wasted. Australia is now one of the greenest farming communities in the world because we don't add things to the environment unless it is needed."



Quad bikes are used more because they are cheaper on fuel. UHF communication is on all of the vehicles letting the Porkers talk to each other. "This saves a lot of money and time as you can find others quickly when needed instead of driving around wasting fuel," said Jim.





Jim is confident about the future.

“As the world gets smaller and because we can communicate better with other people all over the world, we are able to plan by knowing what people will want in two to three years time. We also have our own nursery so that we can grow trees ready for what we will need in the future. This way we know what crops we need to grow to suit what people want to buy.”

“We need to look after the land otherwise it is wasted... you feel good when you do something that helps look after our Earth.”



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2017 Year 3-5, Palinyewah Public School

Congratulations!

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and
the Creative Catchment Kids Program won the
National 2016 Yates Junior Landcare Team Award.



Australian Government

National
Landcare
Program

