

GETTING DOWN AND DIRTY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Beautification, education, biodiversity and sustainability have all collided in an exciting five year project that has taken its first steps this month. Instigated and facilitated by Nature Glenelg Trust, in conjunction with the Limestone Coast trail Committee, Mount Gambier High School, St Martins Lutheran College, Tenison Woods College and the City of Mount Gambier, the Mount Gambier Rail Trail has seen significant plantings of native species in a bid to spruce up the popular walking and cycling track, as well as educate the community regarding native flora and fauna.



Nature Glenelg Trust senior ecologist Bryan Haywood said the creating of low maintenance native garden beds had been the brainchild of the trust, in conjunction with Tenison Woods College, and the trust utilised its expertise and resources to headline the project - planning, investigating, liaising with stakeholders and most importantly, growing 30 varieties of local native plants.

"We were certainly in the best position to spearhead something like this considering what we do, the access to the nursery and that we already involved in community engagement and biodiversity," Bryan said.

Earlier this month, two days of planting were undertaken by volunteers in the Bertha Street to White Avenue section of the Mount Gambier Rail Trail that has been earmarked for the transformation.



In the ensuing four years of the project, it is hoped schools, businesses and community groups will adopt particular sections of the rail trail, with overall project coordination conducted by Nature Glenelg Trust, including planning, plant sourcing, planting and scheduling of maintenance.

"The education element of the project is also really important and not just for the school students but for the wider community," Bryan said. "Because of COVID restrictions this year we could not do everything we planned in terms of the revegetation project but we are

confident that will happen more as originally planned in the years to come."

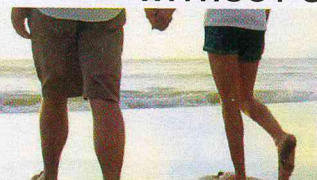
School visits, planting festivals and educational talks from Burrandies representatives regarding the cultural aspects of the project are all on the agenda as part of the five year plan.

"It does have a broad education focus, talking about the ecology of the project, how plants and animals relate to each other and the various species we have in the district," Bryan said. "We did have to strip it back because of COVID but that will be an integral part of the project in years two to five. Having students and community members helping with the planting is as much about what they can learn as it is providing the labour for the project."

Above (top) - Lu-Wei Spinks & Bryan Haywood from Nature Glenelg Trust.

Above (bottom) - The Bertha Street end of the Mount Gambier Rail Trail beautification project.

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