

Pilyabilyanggathe butterfly place

Waite Campus Childrens Centre

In 2007 the Sustainable Futures for Children Committee was established by a group of parents and educators at Waite Campus Childrens Centre to plan, advise on, and regularly review strategic goals that support the achievement of a more sustainable future for everyone. The idea of developing the land to the south and west of the Centre into an outdoor classroom and butterfly garden grew from this group.

Our Childrens Centre has a strong environmental focus. This includes, recycling, water harvesting (implemented due to a Community Water Grant), children's gardens in play areas for vegies and herbs, and environmental awareness and education everyday as part of Centre programs.

Establishing an outdoor learning space for children required detailed planning and development so we sought the assistance of a landscape designer, Viesturs Cielens, who worked with us to develop and plan gardens that use the natural contours of the land and provide designated pathways as well as seating areas for quiet contemplation and interesting spaces for young children. The heavy work was largely contracted to Tandarnya Landscaping. The planning developed over time and has included consultation with the children.



We were able to utilize the knowledge and skills of parents to select local native plants that would attract butterflies to our garden and fortunate in receiving small grants for plants and some of the other work, from the Grow A Great Schools Program, NRM Education and Mitcham Council.



We met with the Kurna Warra Pintyandi Group and have given the Kurna name Pilyabilyangga- 'The butterfly place' to our native garden and outdoor classroom.

Development of the garden has been in stages. Our initial planting took place in September 2009 when parents, children and educators planted 700 small seedlings that were either grown from seed sourced from Trees for Life or tube stock from Growing Bush funded through the Grow a Great Schools program. We were fortunate to have ideal growing weather with warm days and autumn showers in the weeks that followed giving a survival rate of almost 90%. An additional 300 seedlings, also through the Grow a Great School program were planted in May 2010 and May 2011 as different areas of the garden have been developed.

The area now includes a stone rock pool waterfall which is connected to a nearby tap from which the four small pools can be filled. The rock pools are also filled by rainfall and provide shallow pools for thirsty butterflies to drink at. The sandstone also continues in a feature area creating the shape of butterfly wings on the southern side so that when warmed by the sun the rocks provide a warm resting place for our little friends.





More recently work has included stone and log seating and a bush shelter for observation, and a small wetlands area with a boardwalk.

There is a pathway linking our current outdoor garden with this area, a viewing platform providing for quiet watching of butterfly activity and path ways through all areas providing for closer inspection of caterpillars. The outdoor classroom enhances our program by providing a space for young children to safely explore a natural area and allows for monitoring of seasonal changes in plants and biodiversity and the life cycle of plants and insects and the interconnectedness of all living things.



The planting mulching and weeding of the garden has been completed by working bees involving families and children on weekends during autumn and spring. We can see the benefits with children becoming more engaged in environmental education experiences and more active in garden experiences at home.



Waite Campus Childrens Centre is located on the Waite Campus of the University of Adelaide's Waite Campus and provides an education and care services to families working and studying on the campus and to local families.



