

TREES FOR SURVIVAL ENGAGING YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALISTS

In 1990, the Churchlands Senior High School and the Rotary Club of Scarborough, WA, partnered on environmental project “Trees for Survival”.



In the late 19th and early 20th century, large tracts of natural vegetation were removed from the wheatbelt stretching around 900km from Northampton in WA's north to Albany in the south. In the district of Corrigin, close to 98 per cent of natural vegetation was removed. The environmental consequences of the deforestation of native, deep-rooted vegetation were devastating. In some

regions the soil has become so saline farming is no longer viable, and the effects of wind and water erosion has also increased dramatically.

The Rotary Club of Scarborough initially provided Churchlands Senior High School with one irrigated shade house capable of producing 1500 seedlings a year. Plant species endemic to the area were chosen to grow, including eucalypt, melaleuca, banksia,

hakea and casuarina. The variety assists in enhancing rehabilitation of a healthy ecosystem suitable for all manner of wildlife, from insects to birds and reptiles, as well as soil micro-organisms.

Today, the school has four shade houses, growing more than 5000 seedlings annually. Around 60 students are involved in seeding, weeding, transplanting and general care of



the seedlings each year, many giving up their lunchtimes to take part. The Rotary club provides all the necessary hardware, soil and seeds to keep the program running at its full potential.

Then, once a year for the past 25 years, a three-day Trees for Survival camp takes students to the wheatbelt to plant the seedlings they have raised into corridors connecting remnant "islands" of native bush. Around 40m wide and up to 1.5km long, their size enables the safe movement of fauna across farmland, as well as provides them with food and shelter. These

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areas are fenced to protect the plants and wildlife from grazing livestock.

During the camps, the students are educated on the past and present practices that have led to the degradation of the land, as well as

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Churchlands Senior High School students in July 2017 planting seedlings along rip lines; 2015 camp students standing in front of the corridor of trees planted in 2001; Trees for Survival students and teachers on the 2017 camp; Seedlings produced in the Churchlands Senior High School shade houses in 2012. **OPPOSITE:** Happy students ready to plant Churchlands Senior High School seedlings in July 2017.

made aware of their contribution to the rehabilitation process.

Apart from planting seedlings, students engage in many activities far from their regular urban daily life, including rounding up sheep, visiting a shearing shed in full operation, making a bonfire and cooking marshmallows. Students also handle farm dogs, chickens and the occasional pet kangaroo, as well as climb granite outcrops.

Since its beginnings, over 70,000 seedlings have been planted and raised by the students. Not only have the students had fun gardening and participating in camps, they have also been given an insight into the life and challenges faced by rural communities and the environmental issues facing our country. Their participation also shows them the value of volunteering and the intrinsic rewards that come with it. •

WE SHARPEN OUR EMPHASES FOR THE YEARS AHEAD

Having learnt much over our 13 years, we recently resolved to focus primarily on two areas: Safe Water for Every Child and SmartAid.

The Safe Water for Every Child initiative has seen safe water projects commenced in partnership with Rotary clubs in Bhutan, Nepal, the Philippines, Mexico, Cambodia, Colombia and India. They have delivered and installed over 50 Australian-made SkyHydrants, bringing safe water to hundreds, with more to follow.

An Australian Disaster Aid Response Team (DART) deployed to Chiapas, Mexico, following the massive earthquake and, assisted by the Rotary Club of San Cristobel, met with those affected and asked, "What do you need most?". The response was rebuilding a school and homes (using locally sourced materials where practicable) and installing a SkyHydrant System in a local hospital. And that, is SmartAid.

In a busy year, we welcomed new directors, Dr Angeline Low from Sydney and Endeavour Hills Rotarian Brian Ashworth, adding considerable experience and skills to the board.

We are delighted to announce that Disaster Aid Australia has been allocated a breakout session – Safe Water: A Basic Human Right – at the Rotary International Convention in Toronto. It will include addresses by Rotary International president-elect Barry Rassin and SkyJuice Foundation founder Professor Rhett Butler. My colleagues and I look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you for your support •



Disaster Aid Australia

*David Langworthy
Chairman, DAA*

We always welcome enquiries from Rotary clubs about becoming a Disaster Aid Australia representative in their district. Contact us at info@disasteraidaustralia.org.au and follow us at www.facebook.com/disasteraidaustralia