

Rivers, the veins of our Country

Six case studies of First Nations involvement in managing water for the environment in the Murray-Darling Basin
2022-23

Aspiring young leaders connect with Culture and Country

Riverland Indigenous Rangers teach students about First Nations and Western science ecology

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Since 2021, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre and Deniliquin High School have partnered to support 3 First Nations students through a School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT) program.

The program enabled the students to continue their year 11 and 12 studies, whilst also completing a Cert II TAFE qualification in Conservation and Ecosystem Management. The students were supported and connected with mentors and Elders from their community and gained valuable experience on Country.

During the school year the trainees were involved in a number of cultural heritage assessments and natural resource management activities in the Murray Valley National Park (Millewa Forest). These experiences included:

- Cultural site surveys
- Turtle monitoring
- Water quality monitoring
- Fire trail assessments
- Waterbird and Australasian bittern monitoring
- Frog acoustic surveys
- Feral animal control program
- Wetland fish surveys



*Trainees completing a cultural assessment of a fire trail.
Photo credit: Brady Cronin*

The trainees also had the opportunity to be leaders of the Massive Murray Paddle in 2023, guiding a group of young Deniliquin High School students on a 5-day, 415km kayak adventure along the Murray River. This was a collaboration with Deniliquin High School, Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council, NSW Police and NSW NPWS.

The core focus of school-based traineeships are to engage young people to think about their aspirations and to connect with their education, the environment and Culture. These programs allow the students to connect and care for Country while at school, as well as gaining the qualifications to continue their passion post-school.

School based traineeships go far beyond just learning - they provide a nurturing environment for like-minded people with a similar passion for Country, to learn, share knowledge, and grow.

It is imperative to keep such opportunities available for First Nations youth so together as a community we can continue to guide, mentor and inspire them to become strong, confident young

individuals. Programs like these provide the opportunity for the students to be leaders of their communities that can care for Culture, community and the environment.

These partnerships wouldn't be possible without the dedication and hard work of participating organisations, the local First Nations community, and the commitment, enthusiasm, and dedication of the school-based trainees themselves.

This SBAT was partly funded by the Murray Darling Basin Authority through The Living Murray Indigenous Partnerships Program. The Living Murray provides opportunities for young First Nations people to connect, grow and learn about water, Culture and the environment. The program has a continued aspiration to connect and build positive relationships with First Nations communities on Country through meaningful partnerships such as School Based Traineeships for First Nation students.

Trainees with Yarkuwa River Rangers
Photo credit: Brady Cronin



Trainees conducting small bodied fish surveys with ARI.
Photo credit: Brady Cronin

