

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS

KEEPING IT LOCAL



<https://narrandera.com.au/attractions-around-narrandera/narrandera-wetlands/>

**Annual Conference Selective Tours Scholarship winner,
Kay Dunbar, Head Teacher, HSIE/CAPA, Narrandera High School**

In an attempt to promote Geography as a relevant and future focused subject at my small rural high school, all fieldwork is designed around our local community and the environment we live and work in.

Context

To put this Year 10 Wetlands Fieldwork excursion (*Environmental and Change Management*) into context I feel I need to explain the thinking and motivation behind it.

Firstly, we run a compressed curriculum at Narrandera High, which means our Year 10 students roll-over to Year 11 in week 6 of Term 4. Consequently, students choose their senior subjects week 2 of Term 3. With this in mind and being painfully aware that senior Geography has not run at Narrandera High in living memory, I deliberately planned to run this excursion the week before subject selection to encourage students

to consider selecting Geography as one of their HSC subjects.

The second consideration in planning this excursion was to make it interesting for the students. We have a lot of boys that are starting to lose interest in school after recently completing their two weeks of work experience. This excursion was a way to show students the skills they can learn, while studying Geography, which will help them gain employment in the future. The last consideration was to involve experts from the community, which also helps promote conversation around the validity of Geography to a broader audience.

Narrandera Wetlands



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The Narrandera Wetlands, off Bundidgerry Creek, was constructed in early 2005 to filter stormwater before it entered the river. The constructed wetlands project is a result of a partnership between Narrandera Shire Council and Narrandera Landcare Group who were successful in securing funding from the Federal and State Governments (Narrandera Tourist Information Centre).

Organisation for the excursion

The idea for the excursion came to me after attending the GTA Annual Conference. The enthusiasm of teachers for Geography empowered me to be more proactive in promoting the subject in my school and community.

I began by contacting our local council as I believed they were responsible for the maintenance of the Wetlands. Council suggested I contact Landcare, which I did and thankfully they were very keen to assist. We negotiated the time and what activities we would conduct. It was decided that Landcare would explain the purpose and function of constructing the wetlands and the ongoing impact on the environment and community. Landcare were also to run a Mini Beasts identification activity and myself and two other teachers would run the quadrant and weather observations, water and soil testing activities.

The Excursion

The driving questions for this excursion were:

- How do environments function?
- Why is an understanding of environmental processes and interconnections essential for sustainable management of environments?

Students were supplied with a booklet in which they had to record their findings and test results.

Activities included:

- Two writing tasks
 - *In geographical terms, explain why the wetlands were created here.*
 - *Using the knowledge you have acquired through your fieldwork, write a letter to Council and Landcare suggesting changes and improvements to the wetlands that will benefit the community.*
- Weather observations (Kestrel anemometer): Beaufort Wind Scale, temperature, humidity, cloud cover
- Soil Survey: identification, texture, pH
- Mini Beast: identification and count to gauge health of water/environment
- Water Testing: turbidity, salinity, temperature, nitrogen, phosphorous, pH

- Quadrant: plant identification, fauna identification
- Human Impacts

Reflection

We only had 120 minutes, which included travel time, to conduct our fieldwork. Students had approximately 20 minutes at each station, however we only got through three rotations. Students were cooperative and very engaged in all the activities.

In hindsight, I think we tried to do too much in a short amount of time. Consequently, class time will be allocated so students can complete the activities in the booklet. This will also allow students who were absent to use the equipment and get some results.

In terms of achieving the goal of promoting Geography as a senior subject, I feel that some students will at least consider it now. I feel that parents and the community is also becoming familiar with the skills we can teach their children through my promotion of everything we do on the school Facebook page.

Senior subject selection is this week so I will have to let you know if I was successful in getting Senior Geography running or not.

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