

# Getting Back To Nature



Lauren Hoysted, Mason Ferguson,  
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Alma Public School



## *Creative Catchment Kids*

**Creative Catchment Kids** is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Western Local Land Services and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

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## *Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre*

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. [www.wirraminna.org](http://www.wirraminna.org)

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## *Murray Darling Association*

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. [www.mda.asn.au](http://www.mda.asn.au)

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Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. [www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)

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## *Local Land Heroes*

In 2014, students involved in the **Creative Catchment Kids** program researched and wrote stories about 'Local Land Heroes' - people, businesses or industries who contribute to productive agriculture and healthy environments in western New South Wales. The program was generously funded by the Western Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes acknowledges the United Nations  
2014 International Year of the Family Farming.  
[www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/](http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/)



Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a PeekKdesigns education program.



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Semitj Hopcraft grew up in Melbourne. Gardening has always been a big part of his life. When he was young, his family would harvest fresh food from their garden. Semitj has fond memories of growing up eating fresh fruit, vegetables and honey. He recalls being stung a lot when collecting honey from the beehives but didn't mind too much because the honey was nice.



A 'green thumb' runs in Semitj's family. His great, great, great, great grandfather came to Australia on the Second Fleet and planted a large garden with the purpose of feeding the first European settlers in Australia. Today, this garden is known as the Sydney Botanical Gardens.





Some of Semitj's family are Aboriginal and, although they didn't make gardens, they took care of the land to help it provide them with food. There have been gardeners in his family for a very long time. This history has developed Semitj's passion to educate others about the importance of gardens.



Semitj has a strong belief that we should leave the environment in a better condition than we found it. It is because of this, that he began building his first gardens as presents for friends and family. He recalls showing up with a shovel and seedlings in hand to start a new garden.



The best way to leave the environment in a better state than which you found it is by planting gardens. Growing gardens helps to look after our planet. Plants protect, preserve and improve soil. They don't only provide us with food; they help to produce oxygen for us to breathe.





Today, Semitj works as the Garden Specialist at Alma Public School, as part of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen and Garden Program. He enjoys educating students about creating gardens and the importance of gardens to the environment.

It has been a challenging task to start the Alma garden because Broken Hill is such a dry area of Australia. There has been a three-year break from the former drought conditions, but we are beginning to see very dry conditions returning. Some of our winter crops did not grow in 2014 because of the unusually high temperatures.



Semitj wants to educate our future generation about the importance of gardening and wants them to recognise that food does not simply come from the supermarket. Although there are currently no community gardens in Broken Hill, Semitj would like to see one started. He believes they are a valuable community resource that allows people to share their knowledge of plants.







It is important that knowledge of plants is passed down to ensure that it is not lost.





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Local Land  
Services  
Western



Australian Government