

# Richard McTernan: Indigenous Land Management



Gabe Kennedy, Ben Lynch, Jack Morris  
and Jonah Cousins

Glenroy 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 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 PeekKdesigns, 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 along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes acknowledges the United Nations  
2014 International Year of 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 Peekdesigns education program.



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Richard McTernan is not only a Local Land Hero, but is also a dad in our school and a respected community member.

He spent the first eleven years of his life on a farm near Naracoorte in South Australia. His role working in natural resource management, interests in conservation and present position as an Indigenous Liaison Officer have all contributed to his practiced knowledge in land management.



Richard's role is focused on increasing the use of Indigenous ecological knowledge and assisting the local Aboriginal community in traditional land management, so that they can have a greater input into how their traditional lands are managed.

One of the first workshops he facilitated was a stone tool making day where the Elders made stone tools, such as blades, axes and spear points from fine grain stone. This ancient skill is known as stone knapping.





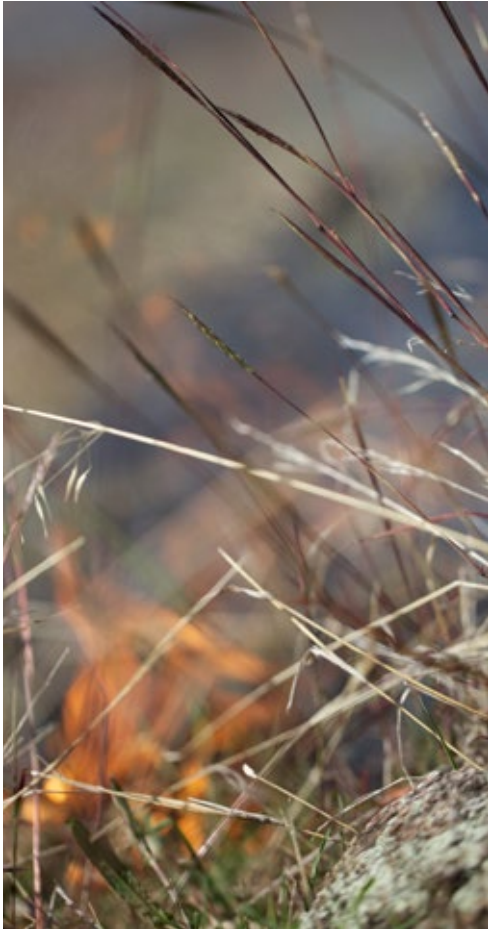
At workshops, the Elders hold tool-making demonstrations on how to make spears and stone axes using the native resources such as wood from Silver wattle, resin from Grass trees and stone from their traditional lands. These workshops help sustain Indigenous culture today, and will do so for future generations. The use of these natural resources are of cultural importance to Aboriginal people.



Aboriginal scarred trees are evidence of the deliberate removal of bark or wood for various purposes. These purposes include the construction of gunyahs (bark shelters), canoes for travel on waterways and to make coolamons (containers) for collecting food and carrying water.

The bark is usually removed from the trees with a sharpened stone like an axe. These scarred trees are an important reminder of the Aboriginal heritage and culture in our area.



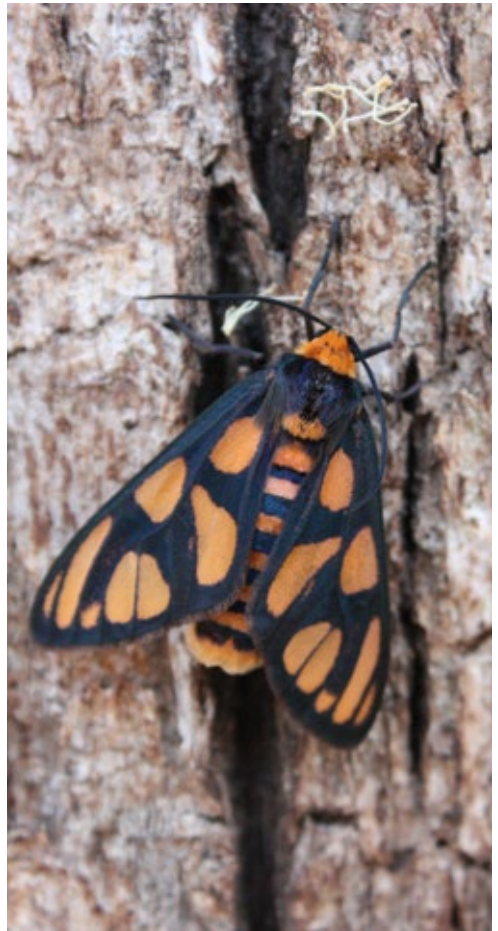


Fire is another important aspect of sustainable land management. Very small cool burns can be done on a day to day basis with consideration of the moisture and wind at the time. This cool fire method burns back on itself in a circular design rather than big long lines of high intensity fire. This method of burning was part of the healing process of the land. To learn more about fire try this link: <http://burraja.com/films/#one>





Birds and animals eat the fruit of plants and disperse the seed through the landscape. Fire helps seeds to germinate native species of trees, grasses and shrubs. As a result of fire, plants produce new growth which animals love to feed on. The combination of burnt and unburnt areas of land helps prevent large bushfires that could destroy the land.



Everything comes from the environment – food, medicines, glues, clothing, tools and weapons.

The Grass tree has many uses. The flowering stem provides the base for the fire sticks and nectar is collected from the flowers for eating. Resin from the base is also used in gluing axes. Many of these procedures are still in use today.





Food is referred to as 'Tucker' that can be collected from the natural environment from things like berries, animals, fish and grubs. For over 60,000 years, Aboriginal people have learnt techniques to remove toxins from poisonous plants before cooking them for meals. Some foods are also baked over hot coals or in ground ovens, usually wrapped in mud and leaves from certain plants or bark.



There is a growing interest in Indigenous land management as people today are looking for alternative methods to manage their land. It is recognised that current practices are in need of change. Creating opportunities for the sharing and exchange of traditional practices will certainly contribute to a more sustainable and safer environment.





It is very important for the Aboriginal people to pass on this information about their culture to future generations. Today, scientists are working with Aboriginal Elders to assist in land management and help record their knowledge for their future generations.

Through Aboriginal Elders providing cultural awareness to land managers it is helping people to understand the importance of Aboriginal culture to land management.





Richard currently works on a project called the enhancement of the Box-gum grassy woodland which is a threatened ecosystem in eastern Australia.

As part of our school environment program we are creating an open garden learning space, using the plants from this ecosystem. This unique learning environment, to be called Little Nail Can, will enrich the students' understanding and interaction with nature when using this outdoor classroom.







Ben Lynch, Jonah Cousins, Jack Morris and Gabe Kennedy

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We would like to thank the photographers  
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peek  
designs



Local Land  
Services  
Murray



Local Land  
Services  
Riverina



Australian Government