

18 May, 2010

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## Students dig in to aid Westgate Park

STUDENTS from Carlton Primary School and Footscray City College will roll up their sleeves and dig in at Westgate Park, a transformed rubbish dump and industrial site.

The students will be taking part in greening activities as part of an RACV/Greening Australia project on Tuesday, 18 May.

The students will join with The Friends of Westgate Park who have transformed the area into a show-piece of what the Melbourne port area looked like upon the arrival of John Batman in 1835. Students consequently gain an historic perspective of Melbourne's development as well as gain satisfaction from helping improve the site.

As part of the same program in 2009, year 10 students from Elwood Secondary College and the St Kilda Primary School Environment club joined the Friends Group to continue the decade-long work of restoring the area under the Westgate Bridge.

During the program, participants ranging in age from 6 to 16 were welcomed to the site by local Aboriginal elder, Shane Charles representative of the BoonWurrung Foundation. They then took part in a cultural awareness program, including sampling some of the local bush tucker.

"It tastes just like something mummy cooks," said one primary school student in surprise after eating a *Lamandra longifolia* stem.

To the delight of the little girl, Shane Charles explained that this was his people's version of Bok Choy.

The theme for the day was "biodiversity" and the children taking part, from all different backgrounds, represented the diversity within the school community.

Organiser of the event, Greening Australia's Peter Preuss, said that "bio" referred to living things, as biodiversity was "the various different types of living things".

"After completing the program, students of all ages appreciate the concept of biodiversity conservation," said Mr Preuss.

Both Elwood Secondary College and St Kilda Primary School have since completed the Biodiversity Audits and are now busy implementing Action Plans to improve the biodiversity conservation values of their school grounds. Both schools have maintained a connection with the Friends of Westgate Park.

This year's students will be equally diverse with both Carlton Primary and Footscray City College among Melbourne's most culturally diverse schools.

As well as eating some of the local plants, students will again get very busy revegetating an island in one of the billabongs within the park and will try their hands at Water Watch activities.

The students will also plant 500 plants and will use their new found skills within their own school grounds. Greening Australia will help the students conduct Biodiversity Audits and Action Plans to enhance the biodiversity values of their own school grounds later in the year.

## **RUNNING SHEET FOR THE WESTGATE EVENT**

10am           Arrival of schools and RACV staff at Westgate Park (Todd Rd, Port Melb entrance)  
10.15am       Welcome to Country by BoonWurrung Foundation (Shane Charles).  
10.30 – 11.15 Activity 1       Experience Aboriginal Culture (with Shane Charles)  
11.15 – 12.00 Activity 2       Planting with the Friends of Westgate Park  
12.00 – 12.30 Lunch will be BYO  
12.30 – 1.15 Activity 3       Environmental games and Water Watch with Greening Australia  
2pm           Return to school

*NB: Each activity will run 3 times. Participants will be divided into three mixed groups (primary students, secondary students and RACV staff) to rotate through all 3 activities.*

### **Media contact:**

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