



THE
FORKTREE
PROJECT

THE FORKTREE PROJECT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Overview and Development Plan

Introduction to the Project

The Forktree Project is a registered charity dedicated to habitat and biodiversity restoration and sustainability education for school groups, tertiary education students and the wider community.

The **CORE AIM** of the project is **to enable widespread re-establishment and protection of biodiversity** throughout the Hills and Fleurieu region via the following means:

The Forktree Project Nursery: The Forktree Nursery grows native plants for both the Forktree Project's exemplar site and other Hills and Fleurieu properties. The Forktree Project works closely with clients to advise on appropriate species for meaningful ecosystem restoration.

The Forktree Project Rare Seed Orchard (RSO): The RSO serves two important functions: (i) to grow native grasses in density with a view to the harvesting of seed for direct seeding projects; (ii) to create security populations of threatened native species with a view to harvesting seed for propagation of these species in the Nursery.

Ecosystem restoration services: The Forktree Project is currently working to restore an extensively cleared former pastoral property on South Australia's Fleurieu Peninsula. This involves planting tens of thousands of native trees, shrubs and grasses to restore native habitat for endemic fauna and to sequester tens of thousands of tonnes of CO₂ over the life of the project, as well as enabling natural processes to rewild the landscape.

Experiential education: The Forktree Project Education Program offers experiential sustainability education for school students from Yrs 4-12 as well as tertiary education students. The program is grounded in a firm conviction that educating young people about climate change and biodiversity loss, engendering in them a desire to care for the environment, and empowering them through positive engagement in habitat restoration and sustainable practices is vital for the future health of our planet.

The Forktree Project Education Program

The Forktree Project Education Program has grown rapidly from its first visits from two schools in 2021 to over 30 visits in 2023, reaching over 1,500 students throughout 2023 alone.



Vision Statement

The Forktree Project Education Program is committed to working towards the realisation of the following vision:

-  **AN ENTHUSED AND EMPOWERED YOUNGER GENERATION** that is **passionate** about caring for the environment, **informed** about the climate crisis and biodiversity loss, **knowledgeable** about ways in which they can help, and **empowered** to do so;
-  **ENHANCED WELLBEING** amongst young people and the wider community as a result of greater connection with the natural world and satisfaction as a result of engagement in solutions to the climate crisis and biodiversity loss;
-  **INCREASED EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION** within the Australian education system and wider understanding of its benefits to student learning and wellbeing outcomes;
-  **RESTORED AND ENRICHED LOCAL BIODIVERSITY**, contributed to by the combined efforts of students from a wide range of schools.

Mission

In order to realise this vision, the Forktree Project Education Program's mission is as follows:

-  **To provide meaningful and inspiring opportunities** for young people to connect with nature, understand the issues of biodiversity loss and climate change and **engage purposefully in habitat restoration**;
-  **To create a culture of positive collective action** amongst young people through engagement in the program;
-  **To successfully restore habitat** and protect biodiversity on project site(s);
-  **To encourage and support student bodies** to establish their own habitat restoration and protection projects within their own communities and ecosystems.

PART A: CURRENT PRACTICE

Program Structure

The Forktree Project Education Program currently offers the following options:

Day excursions – a day of sustainability education and service learning at The Forktree Project, preceded by a context-setting in-school workshop.

Overnight camps –an extended range of activities on site PLUS camping overnight, allowing for deeper engagement and connection with the natural world and an enhanced sense of achievement, ownership and purpose.

Multi-phase programs – bespoke programs designed for individual school cohorts consisting of multiple incursions (to establish context and set challenges) and multiple excursions to the Forktree site throughout the year to allow engagement in a range of seasonal activities. Extended engagement undoubtedly leads to significantly enhanced learning outcomes.

Online extended programs for remote school communities – designed to share with remote school cohorts the Forktree Project philosophy, purpose and methods, with a view to mentoring and inspiring them to establish their own project.



Program Content

The Forktree Project Education Program is founded on the principles of Experiential Education and a firm belief in the value of Learning by Doing.

All activities undertaken by students make a genuine, hands-on contribution to the habitat restoration work of the project. Program schedules always include a combination of:



- Seasonal **plant-based** activities (e.g. tree planting in the winter, seedling propagation in the nursery in the summer);
- **Land management** activities (such as invasive species management, erosion control etc);
- **Circular economy** activities (such as resource collecting and sorting, building infrastructure out of repurposed “waste” materials); and
- Reflection on how engagement in purposeful contributions to the health of the planet **enhance our wellbeing**

All activities are explored through the lens of **WHY** they are being undertaken and **HOW** they contribute to combatting climate change and biodiversity loss.

Curriculum Links

The Forktree Project works closely with individual schools to ensure close alignment with specific **Australian Curriculum, SACE or IB** Learning Area assessment objectives.

Engagement in the Forktree Project Educational Program also creates opportunities to meet the Australian Curriculum's **General Capabilities** and **Cross Curricular Priority of Sustainability**.

The Forktree Project is developing a bank of resources and units of work for key Learning Areas, including Science, STEM, Economics, Geography, Outdoor Education, AIF, Creative Arts and English.

Leadership and Governance



Environmental scientist and Forktree Leader **Tim Jarvis AM** has proven expertise in managing ambitious projects from inception to reality, honed by decades of successful leading of complex and challenging expeditions. Tim advises government and corporates on biodiversity protection and sustainability leadership and was nominated South Australian of the Year 2024 for services to the environment. Tim brings his wealth of knowledge on biodiversity loss and climate change as well as his pragmatic can-do approach to these issues to the Forktree Project Education Program.

Forktree Education Director **Elizabeth Blumer** is a qualified and registered high school teacher with over fifteen years' experience of mainstream high-school education including classroom teaching and year group leadership, as well as primary school governance. She has post-graduate qualifications in Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing in Education and is passionate about the potential of the Forktree Project Education Program to deliver meaningful educational outcomes and significant wellbeing benefits for young people.

The Forktree Project's Education Advisory Group (EAG) is made up of experienced educators from across the full range of education sectors and Learning Areas, including Wellbeing, while other EAG members bring a range of complementary perspectives such as a First Nations perspective and nature-play pedagogy.

The Team

The Forktree Project Education Program team consists of:

-  The FP Education Program leadership
-  The core Forktree Project Nursery and Land Management team of knowledgeable and well-qualified ecologists and biologists;
-  A pool of experienced and engaged volunteers who bring with them a wealth of experience and serve as excellent role models for young people of individual prepared to give their time for a good cause.



REWILDLING. IT'S IN OUR NATURE

Compliance

The Forktree Project Education Program is committed to maintaining high standards with regard to compliance and child and young person safety.



- All team members have up-to-date Working With Children Checks (WWCC);
- Full DfE-standard risk-benefit analyses are completed prior to every visit to site by students;
- The Forktree Project has appropriate public liability and volunteer workers insurance;
- Team members are given appropriate training in Child Safety, including RRHAN-EC training;
- The project has a First Aid Officer and ensures that team members have appropriate and up-to-date First Aid training;
- The project's Child and Young Persons Safety Policy & Procedure document is available upon request, along with all other policies.



PART B: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Forktree Project Education Program is immensely proud of its work to date.
However, we are restless and want to do more!

Our plans for how we can develop our education and wellbeing offering throughout 2024 and beyond are as follows:



Objectives for 2024 and Beyond

-  To invest in the development of key infrastructure on site to allow for more targeted educational experiences and more extended visits to the site.
-  To provide well-structured, content- and experience-rich education offerings that are increasingly aligned with specific Learning Areas of the Australian, SACE and IB curricula. This will be achieved in collaboration with the Education Advisory Group made up of subject specialists from across the whole range of education sectors (schools represented include Blackwood High School, Tatachilla Lutheran School, Prince Alfred College, Annesley Junior School).
-  To develop the inclusivity of our programs and strategies via:
 - A bespoke extended online program for remote school;
 - Resources to cater for the needs of neurodivergent students and students with other specific learning needs.
-  To invest in the growth and development of the Forktree Project's Education Program team, combining ecological knowledge and expertise with evidence-based pedagogical best practice.



(i) Infrastructure

-  Complete the conversion of one of the buildings on site into the project's Sustainability Centre comprising bunk accommodation, kitchen and bathroom facilities (including accessible and ambulant toilet and shower), a teaching space complete with interactive whiteboard and projector; living area and deck;
-  Design, construct and plant an aboriginal food garden (in consultation with First Nations experts);
-  Design and build an outdoor classroom and sensory space.

(ii) Program Development

To date the majority of students have visited for day excursions. However, it is clear that the educational and wellbeing benefits of The Forktree Project Education Program increase exponentially with extended or repeat engagement, and we are keen to expand our educational offering accordingly. We intend to achieve this by:

-  Use of the completed sustainability centre, the aboriginal food garden and outdoor classroom to enhance program delivery;
-  Employment of an additional educator (0.5fte);
-  Development of online resources, including a community platform, to extend the learning and student engagement beyond excursion days;
-  Professional Development for the program's leadership and team, and continuous reflection on practice;
-  Collaboration with indigenous youth and educators to develop a closer relationship with First Nations practices and values;
-  Engagement with well-matched professionals to incorporate complementary educational experiences (eg. botanical drawing workshops or indigenous art workshops from local artists) which enhance the sustainability and biodiversity-focused core learning of the Fortkree Project Education Program.
-  Collaboration with Flinders University College of Education, Psychology and Social Work to create an accredited program for Pre-Service Teachers and Tertiary Outdoor Education students to contribute to deliver of the Forktree Project Education Program. This program is due to be trialled in Semester 2 2024 with a view to wider roll-out in 2025.

How will we measure success?



KPIs and DATA

The Education Program will review progress regularly, checking it against our Vision Statement, Mission Statement and “2024 and Beyond” Aims & Objectives.

Our KPIs are:

-  Numbers of schools visiting
-  Number of new schools joining the program
-  Range of student demographics reached (range of socio-economic backgrounds; government schools as well as private schools; young people with specific, such as young people with autism, etc)
-  Analysis of feedback data from teachers AND students (before, during and after students' engagement in the Forktree Project Education Program)
-  Evidence of continued engagement in issues of sustainability and biodiversity protection and restoration after students' Forktree experience through 1) engagement with Forktree online resources; 2) engagement with the Forktree online community; 3) repeat visits to Forktree by school students
-  Analysis of success of assignments completed based on students' experiential learning at The Forktree Project
-  Students'/schools' own sustainability- or biodiversity-related projects in their own communities
-  Feedback from Flinders University CEPSW academic leaders and students, including data from their own studies of the Program.





Summary

Testimonials from schools (See Appendix 1) constitute evidence that the program is highly valued by teachers. They confirm that the program's offering is of significant educational value in today's world, not only teaching students about biodiversity, the climate crisis and sustainability more broadly (all the while empowering them to be active stewards of the natural world), but also developing teamwork, leadership skills and resilience.

Moreover, evidence shows that purposeful action of this kind enhances wellbeing, something desperately needed in today's world.

Support us on our mission

We know that The Forktree Project Education Program can simultaneously enrich students' learning and enhance their wellbeing in the process, all while spending time connecting with nature and helping the planet.

We now need the help of financial supporters who share our vision so that the Forktree Project Education Program can grow, flourish and increase its impact.

For more information on how to become a partner on this journey, please contact us via email: hello@theforktreeproject.com.

The Forktree Project acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land which it is working to regenerate, and recognises their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.



APPENDIX 1

The Forktree Project Education Program

Testimonials from schools 2023

We are honoured and humbled to have received the following testimonials from a number of the schools who have visited The Forktree Project:

“The Forktree Project provides students and teachers alike with a hands-on understanding around the importance of maintaining and developing our native biodiversity. On site students learn by doing, concreting ideas of sustainability, circular economy and carbon sequestration, all under the tutelage of a highly skilled and knowledgeable team. A perfect choice for students from Reception through to Year 12.”

Blackwood High School

“Our participation in this initiative has been an enriching and rewarding experience for our Year 7 team. The Forktree Project has provided our students with a unique opportunity to engage with environmental conservation in a hands-on and meaningful way. Our students have gained invaluable knowledge and skills through their involvement in the project, from understanding the importance of biodiversity to learning about the practical measures required for habitat restoration. These experiences were meticulously curated to align with our Year 7 Curriculum and unit focus, making the learning experience even more relevant and impactful.

“Our students have expressed their excitement and satisfaction with the project, with students commenting that it was their favourite learning activity for the year! We are grateful for the opportunity to be part of The Forktree Project and look forward to continuing our involvement in the future. We wholeheartedly endorse this initiative and encourage other schools to participate and experience the benefits for themselves.”

Adelaide Botanic High School

“The Forktree Project has been an exceptional catalyst for environmental stewardship amongst our students, seamlessly integrating a practical exploration of the classroom-based HASS and Outdoor Education curriculum we already offered. While at The Forktree Project, our students witness the positive ecological benefits of rewilding due to the backdrop of denuded pastoral land of the neighbouring properties all around the project. An honest and hard day's work on at The Forktree Project has always left our staff and students feeling a sense of purpose and hope that they can play a role in combating the climate crisis facing our planet. The Forktree Project has become an integral part of shaping environmentally conscious citizens within our school community.”

Tatachilla Lutheran College



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"Visiting The Forktree Project with our Year 8 cohort is one of the most hands-on and valuable excursions I have attended. Our students absolutely thrived while working under the guidance of Tim and Liz and their team. The students learnt about sustainability and circular economy by getting stuck into some hard work and our school is incredibly lucky to have a relationship with The Forktree Project. Learning doesn't get any more hands on and tangible than this!"

Tatachilla Lutheran College

"Annesley's collaboration with The Forktree Project has been transformative. The bespoke extended program developed by The Forktree Project not only addressed our specific outcomes but also gave students a sense of ownership of the Carrickalinga site. The sequential approach has undoubtedly left a lasting mark on our students giving them confidence when leading their peers through various experiences related to the amazing work that the Forktree Project team are doing."

Annesley Junior School

"Liz and Tim work tirelessly to promote and support efforts to protect the integrity of our environment. Their important vision has attracted a multidisciplinary team who are committed to combatting climate change through encouraging sustainable practices, restoring habitat through rewilding and focusing on sequestration. Forktree enables students to participate in a range of tasks that show them they are quite literally planting the seeds of a greener future - a concrete, tangible means of combatting climate anxiety among the next generation. Our school will continue visiting Forktree to supplement students' environmental education with practical application. The Forktree Project offers an effective platform for students to think globally and act locally. It is a relationship we are proud of and look forward to seeing thrive."

Prince Alfred College

"Operation Flinders Next Step program absolutely loved our time at Forktree, it was eye-opening for the young people to see what is being achieved by the project and to have the ability to engage in a practical, hands-on, real life effort. To be able to camp onsite at such a beautiful location was amazing and the young people loved being able to go for walks, do yoga and immerse in the beautiful surroundings. Tim and Liz are incredible ambassadors and live by example, working hard alongside the young people. All information, education and taskings provided were relevant for the group to enable them to experience success and feel that they were playing their part in the project. I would 100% recommend the opportunity of getting involved with Forktree."

Operation Flinders.