

# SUSTAINABLE STUDENTS

## GYMPIE STATE HIGHSCHOOL

### Introduction

Gympie State High is one of Queensland's oldest high schools and we will celebrate our centenary in 2012. As North Coast Region's Climate Smart Ambassadors for 2010, the school has been actively involved in recycling office quality paper and cardboard since the late 1980's, has a mature subtropical rainforest planted in 1992 and has undertaken a variety of actions and projects since these early times to create a more sustainable school and school environment.



From little things, big things grow

### What was our project?

One of our "lighthouse" projects was the Tozer Oval Bank Tree Planting carried out in 2007 to celebrate National Schools' Tree Day.

### Who was Involved?

Year 9, 10, 11 and 12 Geography classes and Year 11 and 12 Biology students as well as members of the Environment Committee and the School Groundsman were all involved in the initial site preparation and planting. Weekend vandalism and natural attrition led to two major replantings, the first supervised by Greencorps in September 2007 with trees donated by Landcare; the second in April 2008.

### How the Project was Funded

Reef Guardian and Burnett Mary Regional Group funding initially helped to get the project started. The project attracted further funding in 2008.

### A Description of What the Students Did

The site was prepared and planted by the Geography and Biology students. Members of the Environment Committee mulched, watered and placed frost covers around the native and bush tucker seedlings. Ongoing watering, weed control, mulching, replacement planting and fencing were the main activities. The site is also targeted during our annual Schools' Clean Up Australia Day activity.

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## **What worked?**

Removing large rocks from the site, mixing water crystals with soil at the bottom of the holes to drought proof the seedlings and watering the seedlings in to bond roots with the new soil ensured a fairly acceptable survival rate. This was supported by the addition of slow release fertiliser pellets to boost the first six months of growth and mulching to retain soil moisture. Each seedling was staked on the uphill side for protection from wayward balls from the sports oval above. Eventually a temporary fence on the uphill side provided ultimate protection until the young trees were better able to fend for themselves.

## **What did the Project Team Learn?**

The team learnt that when many people work together for a common cause, it can make a difference. Disappointment and setbacks are only overcome by persistence and perseverance. Finally, an area that was once a mowing hazard for grounds staff could be transformed to control erosion, improve aesthetics, create an urban bird and wildlife habitat and reduce our school's carbon footprint.

## **What are Our Next Steps?**

Ensuing planting activities have included the Seniors of 2008 Garden and the 2009 and 2010 J and H Block Gardens Projects. We are currently in the planning stages for our 2011 project which has attracted USQ partnership funding. It will involve replanting the gardens outside the Hall, infill planting in front of A and D Blocks to improve aesthetics and to strengthen the road noise barrier and giving the Drama Courtyard a makeover. The latter will incorporate the building of a small outdoor stage on top of one of the former garden beds and replanting the now empty gardens

## **How Do You Contact Us?**

Mr Steve Cranna (Environment Committee Coordinator)

[scran22@eq.edu.au](mailto:scran22@eq.edu.au)

Phone 0754898335 (Wk) or fax 0754898300

