



Children as partners in Communities



Speaker: Rebecca Burch





Nature Explorers is a nature based sustainability educational program operating under Pottsville Community Preschool, a non profit community organization.

It is an outdoor classroom without walls, a complete outdoor program founded in nature pedagogy where children learn with and in nature.





We aim to foster Environmental stewards within the children, developing a sense of passion to take care of our unique beautiful community and all that lives there. The children learn how to protect the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices, this in turn helps build and strengthen our communities.



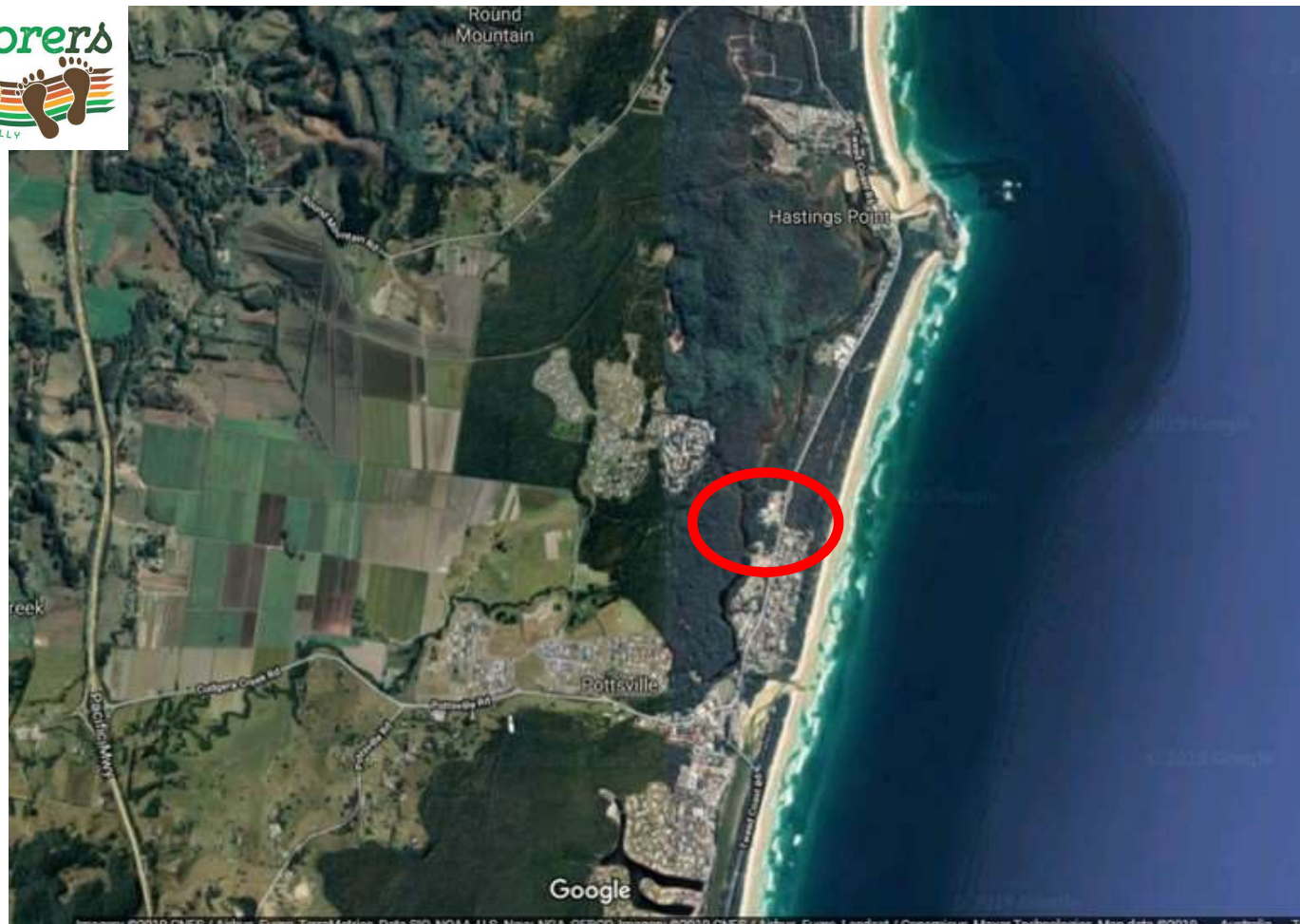
Inspirational people

This presentation focuses on one aspect of our program... the role that relationships and partnerships play in our children's learning, our program and the community.

The children in the Nature Explorers program connect with a diverse range of people that inspires, motivates and supports the children to become active citizens in looking after our planet.

The amazing people we are referring to are the volunteers of our local Dunecare and Landcare groups.





Our home, Pottsville in Northern NSW in Tweed Shire.

Learning about volunteers

Our humble beginnings started a journey on community connections that enriched the children, the educators, family and wider community. And most of all the natural world benefited from it.



Bill and Ann shared much knowledge about the local flora of the Tweed Shire.

They showed us which plants were natives and how to identify them.

The children became very passionate about looking after the natives and the creatures that lived in them.



Sharing knowledge

The children were excited to meet Bill and Ann for sessions, and they listened intently.

They learnt about the interdependence between humans and all living things. And developed an awareness of the impact, that we can have on our world.

They discovered they could make a difference.

All through the weed called Asparagus Fern!



Active engagement

The children in our program had hands on experiences with Bill and Ann to learn which plants were weeds but also more importantly how to weed.

Children become partners with adults in change for the future.



The joy

“Woohoo, we did it.

Look how big that root is!

That’s a huge root!

Its ginormous!”



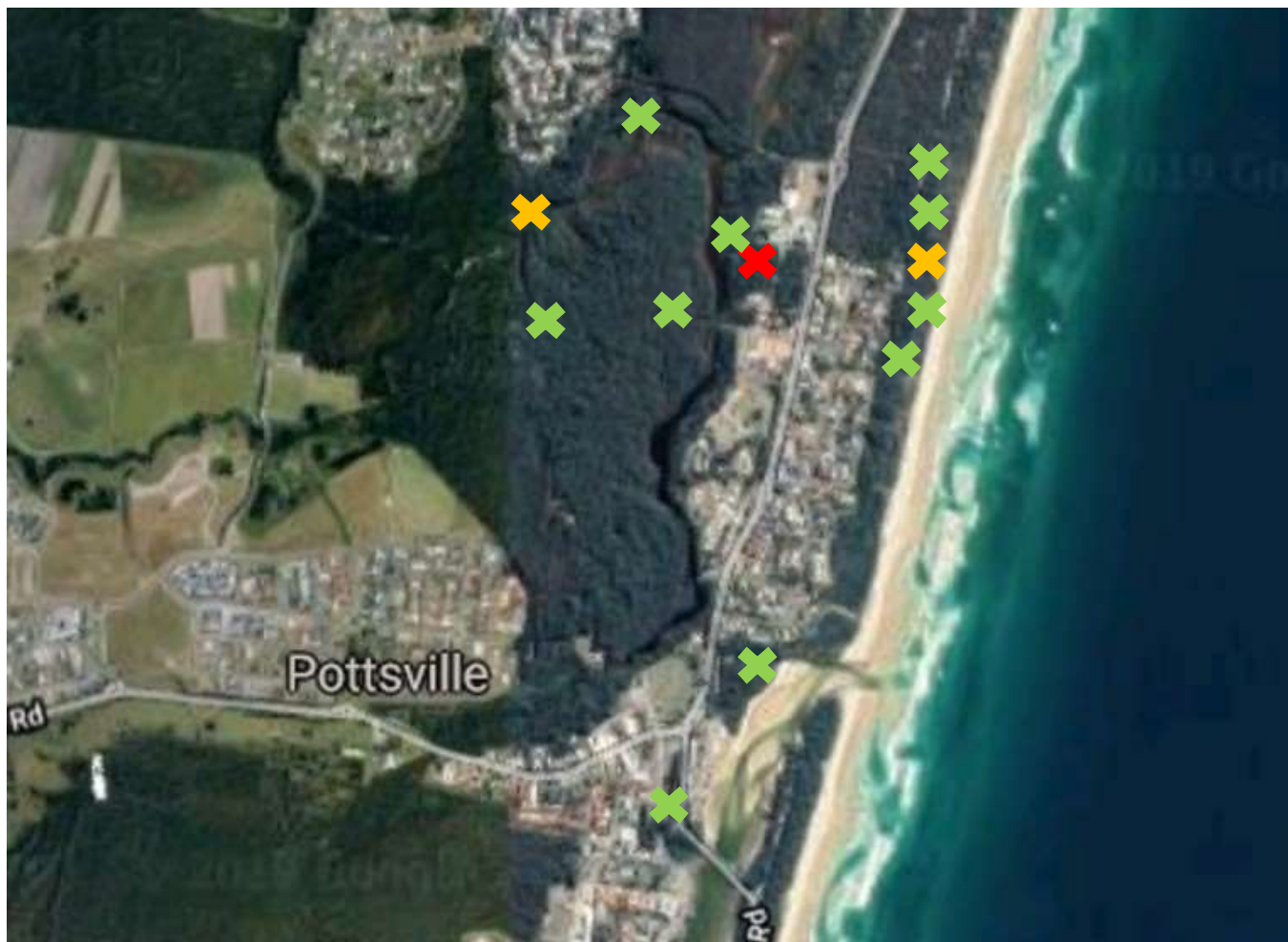


The future

Through these meaningful and authentic daily encounters, children develop strong connections to land and water, and a passion for nature that drives them to be empowering future citizens.

Through community connections the program fosters the next generation of environmental stewards.





Our
growing
community
reach.



Community Connections

The face says it all... connections in the community, warms the heart.

Hidden treasures

The children connect with community volunteers from all walks of life, with diverse talents, each sharing their knowledge, skills and values, children become partners in change for the future at Dunecare.





Sharing knowledge

The children at Nature Explorers were led on interactive walks through the tracks at Hastings Point. The Dunecare volunteers, helped the children discover the local flora and fauna along the way and they shared much knowledge about the plants, and often the traditional Indigenous uses of these native plants.

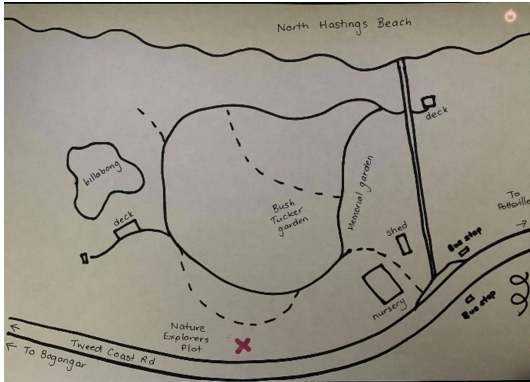


Our very own Landcare plot

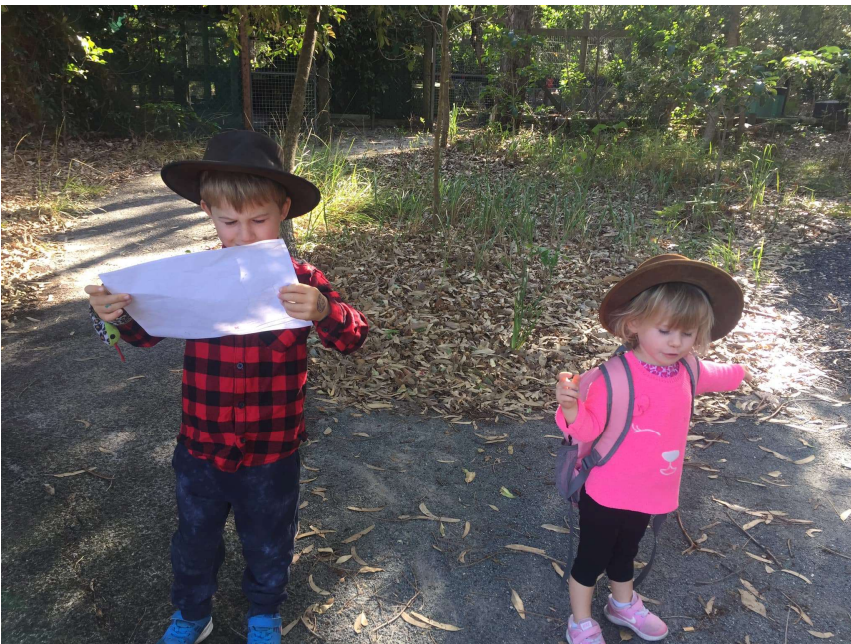
Hastings Point Dunecare created a special plot for the Nature Explorers. They spent much time preparing the site. The trees are slowly growing and we continue to visit this site with the children.

This project and partnership is supporting families to get outdoors and connecting the dots between people within our community as they too visit this Dunecare plot.

Spreading the message



The message goes home to families. Knowledge is shared and the passion for nature is increased.



Research has shown that a child can directly influence the attitude and behavior of their parents towards the environment. Studies showed that environmental education can be transferred between generations and can change household practices.



Partnerships in action

Children are valued as partners working collaboratively with Dunecare volunteers. They were given real life jobs in the nursery and a very valuable one nurturing the Birdwing Butterfly vine and taking this home.







Importance of our youth

“No-one will protect what they don’t care about; and no-one will care about what they have never experienced.”

— David Attenborough

“If we let them, young people will be the world’s most powerful solution.”

— Denise Dunning



Words from Dunecare

"We talk about Nature Explorers and we all agreed that it is one of the best things that has happened to us"

...It's a nice thing to work with young children, its been invigorating and fun, they love getting their hands dirty"

"Its great that we have these very small children engaging in nature that instills a passion in nature and regeneration and rejuvenation"

- Andrew



Did you know... Hastings Dunecare monitor and test water health for our aquatic plants and fish. The community volunteers have been testing our local waterways at Pottsville & Hastings for 8 years. Rainfall, temperatures, tides and in depth analysis of water is provided to Waterwatch every month. Thanks Dunecare 🙏 #landcare #volunteers #community #tweedshire #science #destinationtweed Landcare Australia Tweed Landcare Inc Tweed Shire Council



Reciprocal Relationships

Building relationships takes time, trust and respect.

Its important that partnerships are reciprocal, in that it is mutually valuable and positive. Nature Explorers aims to give back and support the groups we work alongside.

We appreciate and recognise the value they provide to our program and share this appreciation and acknowledgement.



Partnership led to volunteers in Nature Explorers program and supporting new career options.



Partnerships expand in the community



Through building genuine relationships and truly getting to know people in teams and community, we can be enlightened by the stories people have to share and the skills and knowledge they can impart.

Through our relationship with Dunecare, we became aware of other volunteer groups in the community and our partnerships grew. The local Men's Shed were able to make nesting boxes for birds and possums which perfectly aligns with the landcare work we were doing on our site beside the Preschool.



Partnerships expand in the community



The Explorers have opportunity to learn about the roles people play in the community and how each helping hand supports a sustainable future.



Children develop a deep understanding of citizenship and how they contribute to the community they live in. Whilst these partnerships have a direct local impact they are part of State and National initiatives

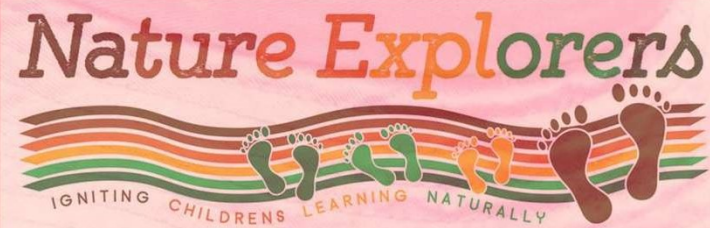
Our recommendations..

1. Be brave... ask, reach out
2. Know it that it will take time to build relationships
3. Make it respectful and reciprocal relationship - support them in their endeavours
4. Celebrate and share the connections you have made and the contributions they make for a better future.
5. Let it touch your heart and soul

Our story

Community engagement has a positive impact on children's wellbeing and learning but also in turn provides significant benefits to community members they interact with.

As young children connect with community volunteers from all walks of life, with diverse talents, each sharing their knowledge, skills and values, children become partners in change for the future. Young and old, together they work together to regenerate coastal dune areas and bushland through weed control and planting natives. They care for animals small and large by nurturing spaces for them to live and thrive. They explore ways to look after our marine life through waste management, storm water pollution, and dune erosion. As they learn with and in nature they develop strong values around sustainability.



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