

Ballardong Noongar Budjar Museum Interpretation Project



Michelle Bateman, Pat Narrier-Narkle, Merle Narkle-Goodwin and Laura Lee made symbolic stone camp circle in garden walk

The York Residency Museum wanted to highlight in the Museum the cultural and heritage values relating to the local area, with an emphasis on increasing community understanding of the need for sustainable management of natural resources so they applied to the Avon Catchment Council (now Wheatbelt NRM) for a small community grant in 2009.

In consultation with the local Noongar community an interpretative display panel was designed, along with a Ballardong Noongar Six Seasons Garden Walk and accompanying brochure.

The Ballardong Six Seasons Garden Walk is a symbolic walk, representing *koora-koora* (the past), *yey* (the present and *mila* (the future) of *Ballardong Noongar*

Budjar (country) and what it means to *Ballardong Noongar* people. *Budjar* is about more than just the land. Noongar spiritual beliefs, traditional social structure, stories and song lines all come from nature. Identity is influenced by the special qualities of *karla budjar* (home Country).

The garden has been made in remnant *marlak* (bushland). Noongar people understood and managed the land sustainably for over 40,000 years. ***“This garden walk is some-***

thing to show that we respect our traditions. More than anything our ancestors respected their environment, respected the planet. It’s just that recognition of our culture that’s important,” said Laura Lee.

**Wheatbelt NRM Small
Community Grants 2009/10
Recipient:** York Residency
Museum
Amount Funded: \$7970
People Involved: 140



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York District High School students and their artwork.

The existing garden was transformed into a native garden with interpretative signage. The gravel pathway curves symbolically to reflect the shapes of the Avon River. Research was conducted on the native species for the area in consultation with DEC, WWF, Avon Valley Wildflower Society and York River Conservation Group as well as local people. The Shire of York assisted with labour and machinery. Students from York District High School were involved in interpretative art work for the Noongar season names, bush foods and animals that were represented along the walk.

Instead of a fixed sign, the local Noongar residents decided on a leaflet to accompany the garden walk. This leaflet could be altered or enlarged as time goes by. The leaflet details plants and animals and their importance to local Noongar culture, as well as a chart showing the six Noongar seasons.

Betty Kane, a museum volunteer said, ***“I have learnt a lot of valuable information about bush-foods, native plants and their uses such as***

wandoo as a liquid source, which I had no idea about before.” Prudence Ford, another museum volunteer said, ***“having talked to some of the Noongar women I can now see great value in the Museum’s role in supporting them to preserve and perhaps even help to rebuild their culture.”***

Eric Ayling of the Avon Valley Wildflower Society said, ***“We always had in mind to plant a Noongar garden one day but haven’t got round to researching it, so were glad to support the Museum project.”***



Michelle Bateman and stone circle.



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