

8 August 2007

BREWARRINA, BOURKE AND GOODOOGA KIDS SWAP CLASSROOMS FOR CANOES

Fifteen students from Goodooga, Brewarrina and Bourke schools will swap their classrooms for canoes as they undertake a three day trip on the Barwon-Darling starting in Brewarrina on Monday, August 20.

The students will learn about water and river health issues during the trip, which is a school activity supported and funded by the Western Catchment Aboriginal Reference Advisory Group (ARAG).

It is a pilot project and if successful the ARAG would seek to support other schools conducting similar trips in the future.

The fifteen boys and girls accompanied by teachers from the Goodooga, Brewarrina and Bourke schools, two trained canoe instructors and James Liego and Craig Alison from the Western Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

The support team will include Western Catchment ARAG member, Paul Gordon, Brewarrina Elder, William Trapman, Brewarrina local, Brad Steadman, and Western CMA staff, Alan Holt, Barry Edwards and Blackie Gordon.

Western CMA Aboriginal Community Support Officer, Blackie Gordon, says the group will paddle approximately 15km per day as well as undertaking bushwalking and outdoor educational activities.

"We will be travelling downriver through Ngemba and Moorwarri country. As well as relying on the river for food and water, Indigenous people have a strong spiritual connection with the river," Mr Gordon said.

"The trip starts with a visit to the Aboriginal fish traps at Brewarrina, which highlight this interdependence and were a great inter-tribal meeting place.

"They will then begin their canoe journey, stopping along the way to monitor water quality and salinity information and plant identification, as well as learning about river health and cultural heritage aspects of river, such as scar trees.

"The group will return by bus each afternoon to their accommodation where they will analyse information from their water samples and undertake other educational activities.

"They will also visit a number of important sites, such as Yambacona Mountain located between Brewarrina and Bourke, which is a significant Aboriginal site and was well known to local Aboriginal people as a good source of grind-stone dishes.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to allow these young people to connect with their Aboriginal culture and to learn about the natural environment," Mr Gordon said.



MEDIA RELEASE



The Western Catchment Aboriginal Reference Advisory Group comprises 22 members who represent the majority of Aboriginal language groups and communities with large Aboriginal populations in the Western Catchment.

The canoe trip is one of a range of initiatives they are supporting to involve the Aboriginal community of the Western Catchment in improving natural resources.

In addition, the ARAG provides valuable advice to the Board of the Western CMA to ensure that decisions affecting the long-term sustainability of the environment are compatible with Aboriginal culture and values.

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