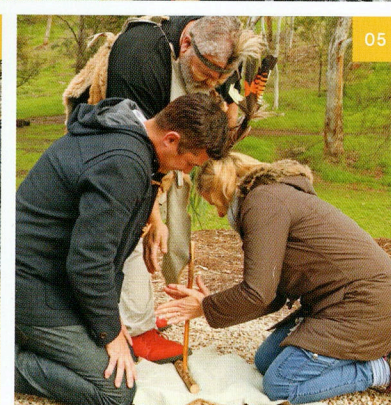




## The Kaurna Shelter Tree



Since 2018, Scotch students have been working to help revegetate a box grassy woodland site within Brownhill Creek Recreation Park with indigenous plant species. Our Specialist Science Teacher, David Pace, adopted the site as a part of the Sustainability pillar of the Year 5-9 Live Well program and since then we have had several groups of Year 5s actively restoring and recording the development of the site as one of our long-term commitments to the local community.

A further community-based opportunity was presented to us in late 2019, when we were approached by Ron Bellchambers, the Community Liaison Officer of the Brownhill Creek Association, to undertake a joint venture – the restoration of a 450-year-old River Red Gum Kurna Shelter tree. The tree is a significant feature of Wirraparinga (Brownhill Creek) and an important part of our local Kurna heritage. It had become inundated by introduced woody weeds and the root system was damaged by the digging of a local trench. Scotch was awarded a substantial Communities Environment Program grant from the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources to instigate the restoration of the tree and surrounding area.

With Ron Bellchambers so capably leading and managing this important partnership, the restoration of the Kurna Shelter tree had been achieved by the

end of June this year. The work has been highlighted in commentary by the Minister for Environment, The Honourable David Speirs MP, on the floor of parliament and celebrated as a full community venture. Ron has capably brought in volunteers from Mitcham Historical Society, the Rotary Club of Brownhill Creek and Mitcham Uniting Church, along with visitors to the park.

Following the removal of the woody weeds, 1,227 native grasses, ground covers, creepers and shrubs were planted by volunteers, following the advice of Kurna Elders. Kurna Elder Auntie Lynette Crocker planted a patch of 200 Yam Daisies which will enable harvesting of bush tucker at the site in springtime.

An Environmental Education day last October brought 244 students together from across five local primary and secondary schools, using the site as a focus point for their learning. Students participated in 12 workshops to enhance their understanding of water quality, soil testing, identification of macro invertebrates, native fish, birds and frogs, and the cultural significance of Wirraparinga's Indigenous and European histories. Our Year 5 photo points, which help to track and record the regrowth of the area, have also been shared with students from other schools. Our teachers and students have noticed an increase in insects, native butterflies and native birds at the site.

At the beginning of Term 3, Scotch staff from across both campuses joined together at the Shelter Tree for a special Welcome Smoking Ceremony, led by Uncle Micky O'Brien, as a part of our focus on celebrating cultural diversity. This was followed by a workshop at Scotch led by Tjimari Sanderson-Milera focusing on the role of educators - inclusion and reconciliation.

The Kurna Shelter Tree will now be listed on the Register of Aboriginal Sites and Objects and a Kurna interpretive sign, with QR Code, will take visitors to a webpage with information about Living Kurna Heritage. Thank you to Ron Bellchambers for his dedication and drive and to Mr David Pace for his continued focus on ensuring our students make an important contribution to our local community and see the positive impact they are making.

**IEVA HAMPSON**  
Head of Mitcham Campus

**Feature** Ron Bellchambers explains the significance of the site to our Year 5 students. / 01 Year 5 teacher Mrs Deb Williams celebrating the opening of the site / 02 Uncle Mickey O'Brien gives a gum leaf to Prep teacher Mrs Jacqui Fenlon as a symbol of welcome / 03 The new plantings and red gum seats / 04 Scotch Staff at the Kurna Shelter Tree Welcome Ceremony – led by Uncle Mickey O'Brien / 05 Junior School Head of Sport, Mr Adam Rosser, and Head of People and Culture, Mrs Morag Greenwood assist Uncle Mickey O'Brien with the Welcome ceremony