

Annual Interim Report

Project: Guardians of the Park 2023

Date: 10 January 2024

Project Manager: Christian Eckardt

1. How the implementation of the Project is tracking against the timeline

2023 marked the inaugural year for the Guardians of the Park program under Veolia funding. Western Sydney Parklands' education team was able to deliver the program to 120 students over the 4 school terms. Taking feedback into consideration we suggested some changes to the delivery of the program and implemented them in the Term 3 and 4 after approval through Veolia.

2023 accomplishments include:

	3-Years goal	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3*	Total
Weeding (in sqm)	3,000	1,800			1,800
Planting	4,620	820			820
Participation	240	120			120
Recorded observations		60			60

*Year 3 will only consist of 2 terms

The students exceeded weeding goals, covering an impressive 1.5 hectares in just four terms.

Due to program dynamics, participation targets were adjusted in the latter half of the year to address the specific needs of the children, necessitating a lower student-educator ratio. The revised ratio of 10 children per day ensures program quality and effective delivery of outcomes.

This adjustment impacted the number of plants planted. However, the team will reconcile this number by organizing community planting days delivered in collaboration with the participants of the program. During these events, students will collaborate with the park community to contribute to the restoration of the Cumberland Plain Woodlands.

The progression of our research project encountered a delay as we await approvals from both the ethics committee and SERAP (NSW State Education Research Applications Process). Consequently, the researchers have scheduled sessions to commence in the calendar year 2024.

2. The amount of the Project Contribution spent in the relevant year to date

Project expenditure for 2023

Funding from Veolia (\$)	Planned Expenditure (\$)	Actual Expenditure (\$)
8 Sep 22: 54,060 17 May 23: 50k 17 Nov 23: 40k	Staff: Project Manager 9,240 Project Officers: 47,520 Service Providers: Murru Mittigar 4,608 Toolijooah 17,955.27	Staff Project Manager: 9,420 Project Officers: 47,520 Service Providers: Murru Mittigar: 4,985.20 Toolijooah: 10,167.03
Total: 144,060	Total: 79,323.27	Total: 72,092.23

The difference in planned and actual expenditure is due to the lower number of plants and will be balanced in 2024.

The funding for the project is provided in advance to guarantee the financial viability of the program.

All expenditures from the Project Contribution have been exclusively allocated to the project's requirements.

3. Any other information relevant to the Project or requested by Veolia

Guardians of the Park in Western Sydney Parklands is vital for vulnerable youth, tailoring experiences to those with challenging pasts. The sessions foster mental well-being through nature connection and skill development, breaking barriers to offer a distinctive path for personal growth. Through our collaborations with Toolijooa, we can ensure high-quality environmental work and education, including plant identification and planting skills. Paired with partnerships with Rural Fire Services for safety, and Murru Mittigar offering invaluable First Nations cultural education, the program takes a holistic approach. The experiences from the first year clearly show that the young participants leave the course empowered through the nature-based education experiences. They also significantly enhance their skills and well-being, fostering positive change and societal integration.

Through data collection and analysis in 2024, we will be able to qualify these outcomes.

Educator's feedback:

It has been a privilege to witness the transformation of the students who participated in the Guardians of The Park program. Over the 10-week program, the student's confidence, motivation, and technical bush regeneration skills have flourished. However, the most

heartening thing to observe has been their deepened connection to each other, to Country, and to themselves.

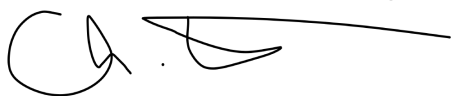
At the beginning of the program, some students were disengaged and weary. However, by the end of the program, these same students had opened their hearts to the work, taken on challenges and responsibilities, shown genuine care for the plants and animals in the area, worked thoughtfully as a team, and gained cultural knowledge through sessions with Aboriginal educators.

One of the most touching moments was when a student shared that when he is at Guardians, he feels trusted and respected. He said that he was able to do things that he never would have been allowed to do at school and that he learned skills he feels he will be able to take with him into the future. It's inspiring to see how this program has positively impacted the lives of these students and their relationship with the environment around them.

Danielle Fine, Education and Community Programs Officer, Western Sydney Parklands



I confirm that the information provided in this report is true and correct.



.....
Christian Eckardt
Manager Education and Community Programs
Western Sydney Parklands



Veolia voluntarily entered into an enforceable undertaking with the EPA following the EPA's investigation into the alleged unlawful use of non-permitted material as cover at the Horsley Park landfill. As part of this undertaking, Veolia committed to contribute funds towards environmental projects