



Learning to love our environment

Connecting students to their local waterway through art


**MORNINGTON
PENINSULA**
Shire

The highlights were:

- *learning from Gidja and working with natural materials*
 - *looking at the local map and learning about the wetlands*
 - *listening to the wetland soundtrack whilst creating.*
- Katie, Rye Primary Art Teacher

Background

Mornington Peninsula Shire's **Artist in Schools** program blended art and creativity with connection to local ecology for primary school students, inspiring future generations to value our local environment.

Studies have shown that connection with nature in childhood results in a sense of stewardship for the environment and that art is an important learning tool for students, allowing them to problem solve, experiment and think laterally.

The program was delivered by **Gidja Walker**, a local artist, ecologist and educator. As students created art together, they were immersed in their local environment through soundtracks, maps and stories. They learnt about the important ecosystem nearby, its role in climate change mitigation and how to protect it.

“As the art teacher, I loved someone with specialised skills visiting.”
– Michelle, Eastbourne
Primary art teacher

The Story

This free program was delivered to 288 students across five schools near Tootgarook Wetlands in 2023, 694 students across eight schools near Western Port Bay mangroves in 2024 and 264 students near Balcombe Estuary in 2025.

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|--------------|---------------|
| 2023 | 288 students |
| 2024 | 694 students |
| 2025 | 264 students |
| Total | 1246 students |

Schools selected one of these two activities:

Yarn in the Web: An ephemeral sculpture workshop. The students learnt how to make string using locally sourced introduced plant fibres. Together, they wove a collective web of life between trees at their school.

Nest creation: The students created nests using plant fibres, flour and water.

Schools were offered a guided walk through their local ecosystem as an additional activity.

There is no doubt that creativity is the most important human resource of all. Without creativity, there would be no progress, and we would be forever repeating the same patterns. – De Bono



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[mornpen.vic.gov.au/
schoolsprogramresources](https://mornpen.vic.gov.au/schoolsprogramresources)