



IMPROVING WATER QUALITY IN RAMSAR WETLAND AREA

Improving Water Quality in Ramsar Wetland Area
Project No 3786
Australian Government Water Fund

We are disappointed that we did not achieve all we hoped for. The vandal who pulled out all our seedlings and destroyed our experiments caused a lot of distress among us all. Although it rather upset morale, it later galvanized the whole community and caused interest and donations which might not otherwise have occurred. It produced full page articles in the local papers and highlighted our work which would otherwise not have warranted a mention. Indeed a great deal was in fact ultimately achieved.

The students planted many plots of seagrass and measured the growth rates; comparing those which were fertilized with rock phosphate with those where Osmocote was used. Osmocote proved to be much better. They also measured the growth rates of mangrove seedlings.

The money spent on constructing puppets was well worth while. Their display at the Easter Fair highlighted the importance of seagrass, mangroves, sea creatures and water quality of Western Port. It was a most successful event. The puppets are still in store and will be used again. (See photos on CD)

Hundreds of mangrove seedlings are "enjoying" the warmth of the hothouse purchased with the grant, which will maintain their growth during the winter months and protect them from frost damage to which they are prone. The Seagrass Partnership will buy these seedlings in October for \$1 each. 70% will be grown along the Lang Lang coast and the remainder will be grown by the children locally at Grantville. This programme will continue and expand in the future.

A pamphlet has been produced by the school emphasizing the value of mangroves to water quality of Westernport and to the energy flows in the ecosystem. This will be distributed throughout the district and will all help to break down the prejudice of some people against mangroves and also encourage volunteers to help. A sample of the pamphlet is enclosed.

The ABC filmed the children planting mangroves and produced an item for the 7.30 Report on June 13th 2007. (DVD of this programme is enclosed with this Report.) Despite all our efforts CWG and indeed the Westernport Seagrass Partnership were not mentioned. However the project funded by CWG has inspired other schools to participate. Six other schools are now involved and will be producing mangrove seedlings for the Seagrass Partnership coastal protection programme.

Students at Bass Valley Primary school have made regular presentations to the school community at assemblies about the progress of their mangrove seedling and the environmental values of mangrove colonies. They have held special events at the school inviting parents to view their learning and investigations.

The students have designed some signs that we hope one day to see at our planting sites. They include information about mangroves and the role they play in the health of Westernport. They have also designed brochures for publication and distribution throughout the local district that intend to dispel some of the persistent myths about mangroves and to showcase the work of the students. (see photos on photo CD).