



Event Evaluation for Neighbourhood Nature

An initiative funded by Preventive Health SA



O'Sullivan Beach Primary School

26 November 2025

Summary



Nature Play SA received funding for a Neighbourhood Nature project in the suburb of O'Sullivan Beach – a project that aims to address the unique challenges faced by this low socio-economic suburb through a multifaceted approach combining physical activity, nature connection, and cultural engagement.

One of the key components of the project is to undertake community activations with the objective to: *strengthen social connectedness and inspire the community through ideas that support physical activity, mental health and wellbeing, and greater connections to nature and Aboriginal Culture.*

On 26 November 2025 the first of three events occurred at O'Sullivan Beach Primary School as part of an end of year celebration with the theme being Neighbourhood Nature. The event saw one of the best turnouts for an end of year school event.

The overall outcomes under the grant were used as a basis for planning the event:

- Increase in physical activity (i.e. walking, more visits to the activated community spaces)
- Increase in social connections
- Greater understanding and connection to nature

To compliment these outcome are the 5 Ways to Wellbeing:

1. **Connect:** Develop strong relationships with people around you, as good social connections are vital for mental health.
2. **Be Active:** Find physical activities you enjoy and incorporate them into your routine to improve mood and health.
3. **Keep Learning:** Try new things, learn new skills, or take on challenges to build confidence and a sense of achievement.
4. **Take Notice (Be Aware):** Pay attention to the present moment, your feelings, and your surroundings to appreciate life more and boost wellbeing (mindfulness).
5. **Give (Help Others):** Small acts of kindness or volunteering for others can make you feel happier and more connected.

The event saw 150 attendees (90 students, 50 parents/carers, and 10 staff) that had an opportunity to participate in five unique experiences.

- **Cubby building:** promoted teamwork, problem-solving and physical activity as children lifted, carried and arranged natural materials to design shared structures. This required negotiation, planning and collaboration, which strengthened peer relationships and provided visible, shared achievements that families could celebrate together.
- **Watercolour painting:** invited quiet focus and reflection, often inspired by local birds and landscapes, supporting emotional regulation and providing a space for children and adults to talk about what they notice in their environment.
- **Small world play:** with natural loose parts encouraged imagination, storytelling and language development, as children built shared scenes and narratives that fostered social connection and a sense of belonging.
- **Clay sculptures:** allowed children to create representations of local animals, places or cultural ideas with their hands, offering rich sensory input and opportunities for persistence, problem-solving and pride in finished works that were then shared with classmates, teachers and families.
- **Nature potions:** activities engaged multiple senses through collecting, combining and “experimenting” with leaves, flowers and other natural materials, promoting curiosity, mindfulness and emotional regulation.

In addition to the experiences resources packs were made available featuring local wildlife posters and resources from a council initiative Our Big Backyard.

Outcomes and Interpretation of Feedback

Data was collected from conversations with key discussion points documented by Nature Play SA staff as well as a six question survey asked to parents/carers. Both were then later interpreted against outcomes. Photographic evidence was also collected to provide a snapshot of the event.

The community event saw families describing the experience as “amazing” and “heaps good,” highlighting the value of having high-quality nature play opportunities available close to home. Neighbours met and spoke with one another, some for the first time, demonstrating that the event functioned as a social catalyst and strengthened local relationships.

Children’s comments reflected joy, curiosity and a strong sense of ownership: “I am making a minty potion!”, “I love seeing the rainbow lorikeets!”, “This is so cool, I want my friends to come here!” and “Please tell me you’re doing this again.” Adults commented that it was great to see children outside and active in their own community, and that they would be more likely to walk a trail if their children had helped design it.

The parent/carer survey conducted at the event provided quantitative evidence of strong community support for the Neighbourhood Nature concept and its potential to promote ongoing physical activity and engagement. When asked whether they would use a Neighbourhood Nature Trail across local reserves, 100% of respondents answered “yes,” indicating clear demand for a connected, nature-based walking experience close to home.

Parents identified the most engaging signage features as colourful, interesting, visual and child-led, including children’s ideas and artwork, and emphasised accessibility. When asked about QR codes linking to 30-second videos, 64% said “yes” and 36% “maybe,” with several noting they would be more likely to engage if they knew children were involved in the content, or if Aboriginal people were sharing cultural stories.

In terms of content, parents highlighted wildlife/nature and culture as the most important themes (50% each), followed by coastal stories (43%) and birds (29%), showing strong interest in local biodiversity and cultural connection. When asked whether a trail across three nearby reserves would encourage walking between sites, 86% said “yes” and 14% said “maybe,” and many noted that a clear map and easy wayfinding would support this. Importantly, 100% of parents and carers said they would attend a similar event in local reserves around the school, demonstrating high appetite for repeated neighbourhood activations.



“This is one of the biggest turnouts we have had an end of year school event”.



Parent/Caregiver Feedback



Neighbourhood Nature – O’Sullivan Beach Primary School

At the event over 150 people attended including 90 children and 50 parents/caregivers, and 10 staff. Of the 60 parents 14 were surveyed representing 28% of those in attendance.

The context provided for the questionnaire was:

We are doing a project in the local reserves where we will have signage that links to students speaking about local birds and Aboriginal people speaking about culture.

In summary, the results of the survey were:

- When asked if they would use the Neighbourhood Nature Trail across local reserves 100% of parents/carers surveyed said they would use it.
- When asked what elements of a sign would draw them in key feedback from parents at O’Sullivan Beach PS was that signs should be colourful, interesting and have visual elements.
- When asked if they would click through a QR code 64% said yes, 36% said maybe with several noting they would if they knew children had been involved.
- When asked what information parents/carers would like to see on signs/QR codes, the most prominent were wildlife and nature (50%), culture (50%), coastal (43%) and birds (29%). Noting that birds may also fall under wildlife and nature.
- When asked if parents/carers would utilise the trail across three reserves 86% of parents/carers surveyed at O’Sullivan Beach PS said they would with 14% saying maybe. When asked what ideas would create incentive 29% said a map would be useful.
- 100% of parents and carers said they would attend a similar event to the one at O’Sullivan Beach PS should it be held at a local reserve.

The questions and response are summarised in Table One with documented feedback on Table Two.



“Look what I made! It’s an echidna!”



Table 1

Question	Response
Is this something you would use?	Yes = 100% Maybe = 0% No = 0%
What is it about sign in a reserve that would draw you in to read it?	Colourful, Interesting, small, children's ideas, children's artwork, visual elements, accessible.
Would you click through using a QR code if you took you to short 30 second videos?	Yes 64% Maybe 36% No 0%
What sort of information would you like to see?	Wildlife/nature, birds, culture, coastal, done by children, info about local area.
If it was across different reserves within close proximity to each other, would that encourage your family to walk from one to the other?	Yes = 86% Maybe = 14% No = 0% Map, easy to find, created by children, not too far from each one.
Would you attend an event like this is we held it in the local reserves around the school?	Yes = 100% Maybe = 0% No = 0%

Table 2

#	Documented Feedback	Adult/Child
1	Can we do this everyday	Child
2	Great set up, be good to do more of this stuff	Parent/carer
3	Look what I made! It's an echidna!	Child
4	So good to see the kids play like this.	Parent/carer
5	This is one of the biggest turnouts we have had an end of year school event	Teacher
6	Can you come back tomorrow?	Child
7	Can we do learning like this?	Child
8	My kid has absolutely loved working with you (Nature Play SA)	Parent/carer
9	You can see how much this means to the kids	Teacher
10	[child name] has not stopped talking about the work his class are doing with you guys	Parent/carer



Interpretation of overall outcomes



Taken together, feedback from children, parents, carers and teachers, alongside survey data, tells a coherent story of a community that is eager to connect with one another and with local nature when opportunities are accessible, engaging and co-designed.

The nature-based, creative activities supported individual wellbeing by offering experiences that foster joy, confidence, curiosity, emotional regulation and physical activity. At the same time, they supported collective wellbeing by enabling shared experiences, conversations and celebrations that brought families, educators and children into closer relationship with one another and with Country.

The strong intention to use the Neighbourhood Nature Trail, walk between reserves and attend future events shows that the initiative has laid foundations for sustained wellbeing benefits. The emphasis on child-led and culturally rich signage and digital content underscores a desire for local stories and children's voices to be visible in public spaces, further strengthening community ownership and connection.

Overall the project has demonstrated that simple, well-designed, local nature play and trail experiences can function as powerful preventive health interventions – activating the schoolyard as an everyday wellbeing space, building community cohesion and inspiring ongoing engagement with nature and culture. These outcomes position the Neighbourhood Nature Trail as a strong platform for continued partnership between Preventive Health SA, Nature Play SA, schools and local communities.

“So good to see the kids play like this”.





Wittunga House, Kurna Country
Shepherd's Hill Road, Blackwood SA 5051
Contact: Jason Tyndall, CEO
jason.tyndall@natureplaysa.org.au

