

Event Evaluation for Neighbourhood Nature

An initiative funded by Preventive Health SA



D.J Leane Reserve (Purple Dragon Park)

6 December 2025

Summary



Nature Play SA received funding for a Neighbourhood Nature project from Preventive Health SA for the suburb of O'Sullivan Beach - a low socio-economic community facing complex social and health challenges. The project was designed a multifaceted approach that combines physical activity, nature connection and cultural engagement. The project's community activations, including the 6 December event at D.J. Leane Reserve (Purple Dragon Park), were designed to strengthen social connectedness and inspire the community through ideas and experiences that support physical activity, mental health and wellbeing, and greater connections to nature and Aboriginal culture.

This event, the second of three under the grant, saw around 70 attendees participate in four unique, sensory-rich nature play experiences:

- Cubby building: an activity that provides teamwork, creativity pride, and resilience.
- Watercolour painting: an activity that encourages free creative expression, supports emotional regulation, experimentation, learning new skills.
- Water run: an activity that problem solving, teamwork, resilience, joy.
- Nature Potions: experimentation, curiosity, creatively, imagination, sensory input, supports emotional regulation, language development.

These were supported by free resource packs featuring local wildlife and Our Big Backyard materials.

Qualitative feedback from adults and children demonstrated that these activities encouraged movement and exploration, created opportunities for locals to meet, and helped families see their local reserve as a welcoming, meaningful place to gather. Comments such as “We just live across the road, this is amazing!”, “How great that you are getting kids out into our community”, and children's expressing connection to birds, potions and watercolour painting demonstrated the event clearly contributed to the three overarching grant outcomes: increased physical activity, increased social connections, and greater understanding and connection to nature.

When interpreted through the Five Ways to Wellbeing, the findings indicate that participants were connecting (neighbours introducing themselves, children and adults sharing experiences), being active (walking, playing and building throughout the reserve), keeping learning (discovering local wildlife and new skills), taking notice (paying close attention to birds, colours and textures in nature) and giving (children and families contributing ideas, enthusiasm and feedback that will shape the Neighbourhood Nature Trail). Together, this evidence shows that small-scale, locally embedded activations like Neighbourhood Nature can build both individual and collective resilience, helping communities feel seen, connected and empowered in their own neighbourhoods.

Data was collected from conversations with key discussion points documented by Nature Play SA staff. It was then later interpreted against outcomes. Photographic evidence was also collected to provide a snapshot of the event. Data is presented in the following sections.





Outcomes and Interpretation of Feedback

Neighbourhood Nature – O’Sullivan Beach Reserve



#	Documented Feedback	Adult/Child	5 ways to wellbeing	Interpretation of Outcome and Feedback
1	“I love how you are doing this for the community, it’s heaps good.”	Adult, local resident with granddaughter	Connect, Give	Reflects community pride and appreciation for shared spaces that foster belonging. This reinforces social connectedness and strengthens intergenerational ties, showing how community ownership of the event promotes wellbeing.
2	“How great that you are getting kids out into our community.”	Adult, mother, local resident	Be Active, Connect	Highlights increased child participation in outdoor play within the local area, supporting both physical activity and neighbourhood connections, key drivers for collective community wellbeing.
3	“I think a trail would encourage us to do more walking for sure, especially when our kids been part of it.”	Adult, mother, local resident	Be Active, Keep Learning, Take Notice	Suggests families are inspired to engage in more regular physical activity through nature-based experiences co-created with children, embedding sustainable wellbeing habits.
4	“I am making a minty potion!”	Child	Keep Learning, Take Notice	Shows curiosity, creativity, and sensory engagement. This type of hands-on play cultivates mindfulness and supports emotional regulation in children.
5	“I love seeing the rainbow lorikeets!”	Child	Take Notice, Connect (to nature)	Expresses joy and attention to local biodiversity, demonstrating an increased connection to nature and awareness of local wildlife, essential for place-based wellbeing.
6	“I painted a wedge-tailed eagle because they are brave.”	Child	Keep Learning, Take Notice	Illustrates self-expression and emotional connection through creative, symbolic art, fostering confidence and emotional growth.
7	“I painted a Magpie because it reminds me of my nanna.”	Child	Connect, Take Notice	Reveals emotional and intergenerational connection through creative engagement, deepening both personal and community identity around nature.
8	“If there was a trail done by kids I’d come and walk it for sure.”	Adult (Reynella)	Be Active, Connect, Give	Indicates willingness to engage in future community-led initiatives, reinforcing how co-designed spaces motivate participation and strengthen social bonds.
9	“We just live across the road, this is amazing!”	Local resident, adult	Connect, Take Notice, Be Active	Shows increased use and appreciation of local green spaces, activating community pride and accessible wellbeing opportunities close to home.
10	“You live around here too?” / “I just live in that house on the corner.”	Two adults, local residents	Connect	Demonstrates spontaneous social connection between neighbours, directly contributing to social cohesion and fostering a sense of belonging and safety in the community.

Outcomes and Interpretation of Feedback

Neighbourhood Nature – O’Sullivan Beach Reserve



#	Documented Feedback	Adult/Child	5 ways to wellbeing	Interpretation of Outcome and Feedback
11	“What a great initiative, can you let us know when it is launched?”	Adult, local resident	Connect, Keep Learning, Give	Shows interest in ongoing community participation and shared ownership, building continuity and sustained wellbeing outcomes.
12	“Please tell me you’re doing this again?”	Child	Connect, Be Active	Expresses a desire for future community engagement, showing intrinsic motivation and attachment to the space and activities.
13	“Haven’t heard of this sort of thing before but it sounds really cool.”	Adult, local resident	Keep Learning, Take Notice	Indicates curiosity, openness to new experiences, and cultural learning, supporting mental stimulation and wellbeing growth among adults.
14	“My little ones love doing nature play things but we usually have to travel for it, so this is great.”	Adult, local resident	Be Active, Connect, Give	Reflects the benefit of local access to nature-based play, reducing barriers, encouraging family participation, and nurturing longer-term community wellbeing.
15	“Love these resources. We’ve got these birds that come into our backyard and now we know what they are called.”	Adult, local resident	Keep Learning, Take Notice	Demonstrates increased nature literacy and place connection; inspires families to continue noticing and valuing biodiversity beyond the event.
16	“This is so cool, I want my friends to come here!”	Child	Connect, Give, Be Active	Reflects social enthusiasm and peer connection, showing how the event encourages sharing and builds positive social networks among children.



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Interpretation of Overall Outcomes



Increase in physical activity:

Many participants referenced walking, outdoor play, and future engagement with trails. The activities cubby building, water play, and nature exploration naturally embedded movement and active participation. This reflects sustained behavioural intention to use the Reserve for physical wellbeing.

Increase in social connections:

Feedback evidence shows that neighbours met for the first time, families connected, and children engaged collaboratively. Adults expressed pride in local initiatives, indicating strengthened community identity and belonging.

Greater understanding and connection to nature:

Children's comments about birds, potions, and painting reflect sensory engagement and environmental learning. Adults valued resources enhancing local biodiversity awareness, supporting their relationship with place.

Broader Community Interpretation

The event demonstrated that small-scale, locally embedded activations can generate genuine social and environmental outcomes. By embedding the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, Neighbourhood Nature not only built individual wellbeing but also collective community resilience.

Trust and connection grew among residents, who began to engage with each other and their shared environment more intentionally.

These outcomes suggest that simple, accessible nature play and creative activities enable communities to feel seen, connected, and empowered.

The Reserve became a focal point for social exchange and pride, reinforcing the idea that wellbeing and community health can be enriched through regular, inclusive engagement with nature in neighbourhood settings.

Overall the event was a very meaningful experience for all those who attended. Many even staying behind to chat and offer assistance to help pack up. There was an appetite for further events that were on this scale – targeted at the local community.

The third and final event will be a launch in March where students will launch the signs and celebrate their involvement.

“How great that you are getting kids out into our community.”





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