

LAKE COWAL CONSERVATION CENTRE



VISITOR INFORMATION AND PROCEDURES BOOKLET FOR SCHOOLS



‘Exploring, discovering and supporting our local environment’

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WELCOME TO THE LCCC

ABOUT THE LCCCC

The Lake Cowal Conservation Centre (LCCC) was officially opened on the 2nd of November 2007 by project partners, the Lake Cowal Foundation (LCF), Barrick Cowal Limited, West Wyalong High School and the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (CMA). With the support of the Department of Education and Training, the LCCC was established to provide the local community with a unique environmental learning centre.

Situated on a Barrick owned property known as "Hillgrove", the LCCC is about 30 minutes north of West Wyalong and five minutes from Lake Cowal and the Cowal Gold Mine.

"Hillgrove" is an ideal site for the Centre and caters for a wide sector of the community by providing a practical learning environment where detailed studies can be undertaken. The site is easily accessible by buses and has a modern barn that has been fitted out with multi-media technology and other equipment to meet the training needs of a variety of groups.

The surrounding working property and remnant bushland provide the perfect location for a range of curriculum linked environmental education learning programs including revegetation, ecological sampling, bushwalking, water monitoring, plant and animal identification, painting/drawing and orienteering. Students work in small mixed groups for the activities, assisted by their accompanying teachers and LCCC Educational Officers.

The LCCC is also investigating new ways to work with schools to establish innovative education programs to suit the curriculum needs of individual schools.



The Lake Cowal Conservation Centre Barn with toilet block, outdoor area and landscaped garden.

LCCC OBJECTIVES

- To increase community involvement and awareness of local, regional, and national environmental issues by developing and providing a holistic community education program that is centred on the environmental assets of Lake Cowal and demonstrates the 'bigger picture' within the Lachlan Catchment and beyond.
- To develop and provide an environmental education program for school students with cross curricular relevance, which can be delivered in a practical manner within the context of the local environment and catchment
- To develop and provide an environmental education program for land managers, that draws on relevant, local research and demonstrations, which can be delivered in a practical manner within the context of the local environment and catchment.
- To provide a facility that enhances current learning opportunities by exposing students, land managers and community members to local environmental issues and providing them with practical experience in addressing these issues via a range of field studies and on-ground projects that will enhance the Lake Cowal environment.
- To develop the knowledge and skills base of students, land managers and community members to better equip them to adopt and promote environmentally sustainable management practices.
- To facilitate the sharing of knowledge and resources between educational institutions, technical advisors, research centres, natural resource management organisations, land managers and the community.
- To encourage local innovation and research that will enhance local environmental knowledge and management practices.

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THE LAKE COWAL AREA

Lake Cowal forms part of the Wilbertroy Wetland System in the Lachlan Catchment. The Wilbertroy Wetland System is recognised as a nationally significant ephemeral ecosystem that covers approximately 29,000 ha. Lake Cowal is located approximately 43 km north of West Wyalong and 90km south-west of Forbes.

When full, Lake Cowal is 18km long, 10km wide and up to 3m deep. The wetlands are fed by water inflows from Bland and Sandy Creeks as well as the Lachlan River in times of flood. The lake is located on the fluvial landforms of the Jemalong Plains and has an underlying sediment base of 1m to 50m. The soils in the Lake Cowal area range from silty loam on the higher undulating country to self mulching grey clays soils on the seasonally inundated floodplains. Lake Cowal is located on the Lachlan Fold belt which has historically been the source of many mineral discoveries of local, regional and national importance. Gold mineralisation has occurred in pods which have been found throughout the Lake Cowal area.

Lake Cowal supports a diverse range of native flora and fauna. The area supports nine major vegetation communities with over 411 different species of flora. These vegetation communities are dominated by species such as Dwyer' Red Gum, Spearwood, Black Cypress Pine, Grey Box, Bimble Box, Grey Box, White Cypress Pine, Belah, River Red Gum, Lignum, Swamp Canegrass, Myall, and Wilga.

The vegetation communities also assist in supporting Lake Cowal's unique fauna which include a total of 72 terrestrial species—30 mammals, 31 reptile and 11 amphibians have been recorded in the Lake Cowal area. The Yellow-bellied Sheath Bat, Little Pied Bat and Troughtons Bat are some of the endangered species that can be found within the area. Lake Cowal is also renowned for its bird life with a total of 277 bird species recorded in the area. Great Egret, Royal Spoonbill, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Shoveller, Masked Lapwing, Latham's Snipe and Silver Gull are also common species. When full the lake also supports 14 different fish species.

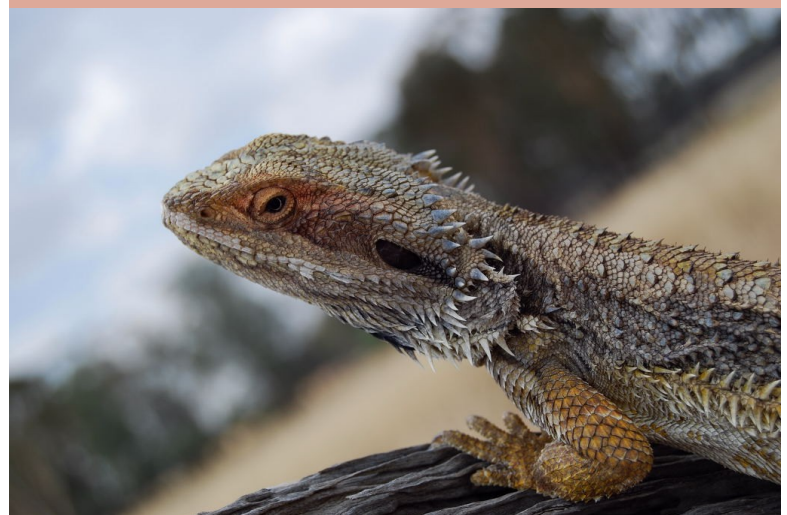
The LCCC's close proximity to Lake Cowal as well as its remnant bushland area allows students and the community to experience first hand some of the many flora and fauna species of the area.



Lake Cowal is recognised as a nationally significant ephemeral wetland ecosystem with highly variable wet and dry cycles



Lake Cowal is located in the heart of the Lachlan Catchment and is renowned for its diverse wildlife



SCHOOL PROGRAMS AT THE LCCC

ONSITE UNITS AND ACTIVITIES

A number of curriculum-linked, educational units have been developed to encourage and involve school students in identifying, investigating and addressing local environmental issues.

Pre-School, Infants and Primary units and activities offered at the LCCC include:

- Magical Living Things
- Water Bugs & Other Critters
- Bush Detectives;
- Beautiful Biodiversity;
- Land use; and
- Catchments unit.

Secondary units developed to date include:

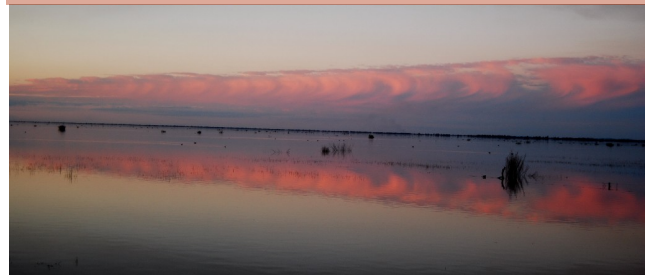
- Yr 7/8 Topography and Fieldwork in Action;
- Yr 7/8 Climate Change Snapshot;
- Yr 7/8 The Dynamic Structure of the Earth ;
- Yr 10 Geography Biodiversity Study;
- Water Unit Yrs 7-10;
- Senior Catchments Unit;
- Yr 11 Biophysical Interactions Geography Study;
- Yr 11 Biology/ Senior Science Field Study (Manna Mountain & Lake Cowal) and;
- Yr 12 Ecosystems at Risk Study

New units are constantly being developed. please contact the LCCC Education Officer for latest updates or to request the development of a new unit for your class

Students from Stockinbingal Public School focusing on the Scats and Tracks found at the LCCC.



Lake Cowal provides a picturesque and diverse environment for studying the LCCC work units



A TEACHER'S TAKE

By Mr Colin Clarke (HT Secondary studies)

The LCCC offers teachers an outstanding venue in terms of resources and location for the delivery of a wide range of environmental education activities.

The centre caters for a broad curriculum range. Materials and activities are constantly being developed and expanded by the staff. This has provided further educational opportunities for school groups. Our school has benefited from this, with the LCCC designing activities to meet our particular requirements.

The facilities are very good and the staff have significant professional experience in environmental fields. They are confident in articulating to students the positive messages regarding our environment and the importance of being informed on a range of environmental issues.

On each of my visits I have seen a further opportunity to link my classroom work to the LCCC. I look forward to being involved in the future with the LCCC, particularly in the "sustainable energy" initiative.



The LCCC logo was designed by the Yr 11 Design and Technology students from West Wyalong High School, with assistance from their teacher, Mr. Colin Clarke. The shape of the logo represents a seed, while the colours are representative of the vegetation, water, soils and sun.

EXTENDING TO SCHOOLS ACROSS THE CATCHMENT & BEYOND

IN-SCHOOLS PROGRAMS

In response to the curriculum needs of schools within rural communities the LCCC has extended its educational offerings to provide in-school programs. These programs are designed to enhance environmental education and science taught within schools. The LCCC in-school programs enable effective sharing of environmental educational resources, such as science equipment and knowledge, across all schools within West Wyalong and surrounding areas.

The LCCC in-school programs are continually developed in consultation with schools with the following Stage 2 and 3 programs currently available for delivery;

- Light up my Life! (Physical Phenomenon—Science)
- Yabba Dabba Maths! (Maths in Science)
- Why is that So? (Exploring Scientific Method & Phenomenon)
- Scientists in the Schoolyard! (Living Things—Science)

Programs can be taught on a weekly basis or delivered within a special theme day.

The LCCC welcomes new ideas and input into its educational programs. The LCCC is more than willing to develop a particular unit of work suited to your school's needs. If you would like to have a unit developed specifically for your school's curriculum please contact the LCCC's Education Officer.

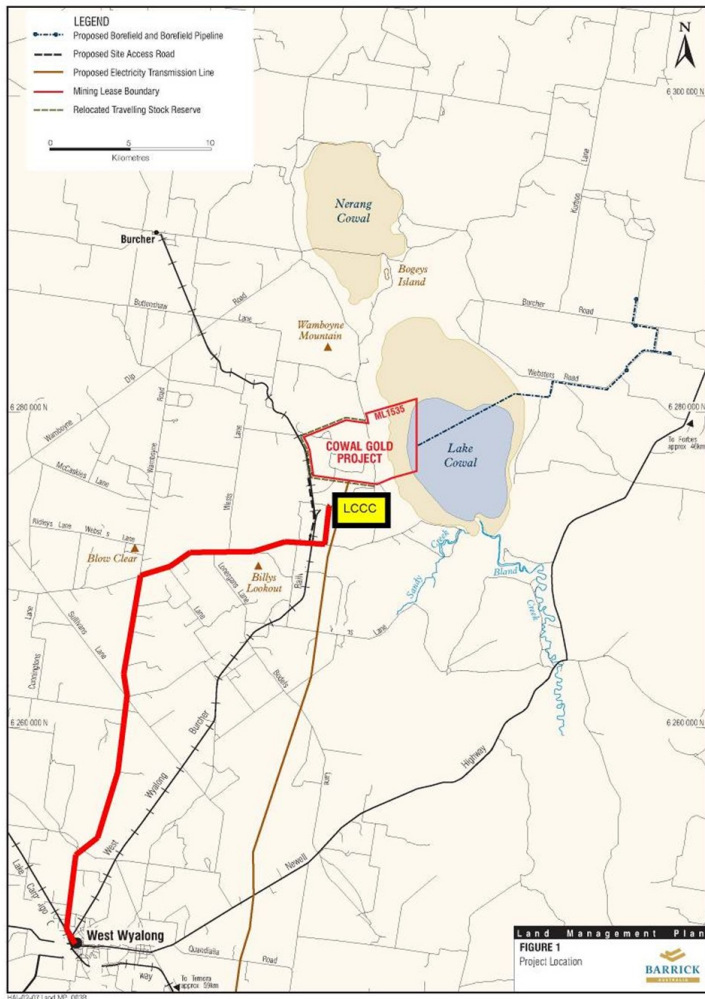


Students from St Mary's War Memorial School learnt all about their waste in the LCCC's National Recycling Week Campaign

OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

The LCCC aims to be an environmental education resource for all members of the local community. The LCCC is happy to be part of or operate School/Community Environmental Education Days as well as be involved in community awareness campaigns. The LCCC is also able to adapt its education units to be taught in locations relevant to your school. Should your school require assistance with site rehabilitation, environmental projects or any other creative initiatives please feel free to contact us.

VISITING THE LCCC



The LCCC close proximity to Lake Cowal makes the centre an ideal place to learn about this unique wetland ecosystem



The barn is geared to deliver learning to a wide variety of community and school groups.

LCCC

The LCCC is currently a day visit environmental educational facility that can cater for a variety of primary and secondary schools from across NSW, university and TAFE classes, landholder groups and community groups.

LCCC STAFF

The LCCC has a full-time Education Officer available throughout the school term and on request during school holidays. Staff from the Lake Cowal Foundation and other partner organisations (when available) are also able to assist with school visits.

LOCATION

The LCCC is located approximately 43km north of West Wyalong. The main sealed access road is from West Wyalong and is illustrated on the adjacent map. More direct routes from other towns, such as Forbes, Condobolin and Parkes, are possible through a number of unsealed roads. The site is easily accessible by buses however wet weather can make some areas of the LCCC inaccessible. Please contact the LCCC prior to your visit to confirm the best route to the Centre.

FACILITIES

The LCCC features a modern barn with a presentation area fitted with multi-media technology, a laboratory area, meeting room, kitchen, storage areas, toilet blocks and protected outdoor learning/BBQ area. Resources such as microscopes, internet connection, reference books, survey and monitoring equipment are kept at the LCCC for use by visitors. The facilities and resources at the LCCC are continually being upgraded to ensure all groups are catered for.

CATERING FACILITIES

The LCCC has basic kitchen and barbeque facilities available to school groups by arrangement prior to visits. Normally schools organise their own food and drink (packed lunch, morning and afternoon tea). However, a barbeque can be provided by the LCCC at a small cost. All visitors are asked to bring their own water bottles and drinking water.

TEACHER INFORMATION

TRANSPORT

Transport to and from the LCCC is the responsibility of the visiting school. Appropriate transport for moving between locations at the LCCC is also the responsibility of the visiting school. A transport subsidy may be available for schools visiting the LCCC. For information contact the LCCC Education Officer (conditions apply).

BOOKING FORM

Please ensure that the LCCC booking form is complete and returned to the LCCC Education Officer at least two weeks prior to the visit.

FEES

Fees charged by the LCCC go directly into the development and maintenance of student resources, equipment and improving site facilities. Students are charged \$5 each. Visiting Schools will be invoiced after their visit. Full payment is required within 30 days of invoicing. Cheques are to be made payable to West Wyalong High School (no cash).

RISK ASSESSMENT

Exposure to the natural environment and fieldwork does involve risks. The LCCC will happily provide a risk assessment to all schools visiting the LCCC. However, the main identifiable risks for field activities are snakes, dehydration and sun/heat exposure. Please ensure that students are provided with the OH&S information prior to visits. Teachers are required to explain and demonstrate appropriate equipment use and safety prior to any activity.

Visiting schools must ensure that they have collected their students' medical information and have a list of students with an allergy or medical condition, and treatment protocol in the event of an emergency. Accompanying teachers need to bring this information with them to inform LCCC staff. Treatment of medical conditions is the visiting teacher's responsibility.

STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Before students depart from their school, they should be made aware of the following responsibilities:

- Smoking, non-prescribed drugs and alcohol are strictly prohibited;
- Students without the appropriate OH& S clothing, footwear and water supplies will not be allowed at the LCCC.;
- Students are expected to abide by the correct school conduct and maintain respect for the LCCC and its staff, and;
- Strictly no swimming is permitted.

IMPORTANT OH&S INFORMATION FOR ALL VISITORS TO THE LCCC

Safety is the number one priority at the LCCC. PERSONAL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT (PPE) INCLUDES LONG TROUSERS, CLOSED IN SHOES, HATS, SUNSCREEN AND WATER BOTTLES. PPE IS COMPULSORY FOR ALL VISITORS, INCLUDING TEACHERS.

Anyone without long trousers, closed in shoes, and a hat will not be permitted to undertake activities on-site, and SHOULD NOT be allowed to come to the LCCC. Staff at the centre are unable to make exceptions due to strict OH & S requirements.



VISITING TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Visiting teachers are responsible for the supervision and discipline of the students while at the LCCC. It is expected that teachers will participate and help conduct educational activities with the support of on-site staff. Visiting teachers will be given appropriate support and guidance for activities from on-site staff.

The expectation is that visiting teachers will possess the appropriate qualifications and conduct the excursion as per the Department of Education and Training excursion guidelines and policies.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND RESPONSIBILITY OF PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

Digital mobile phones are preferred and work within the local area. If students are required to bring mobile phones they are to be switched off during all activities. The LCCC takes no responsibility for the safe keeping of any student or staff personal items.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

The LCCC Education Officer will carry a mobile phone (0407 754 287) at all times in case of emergencies. If for any reason this mobile unavailable alternative emergency contacts are as follows;

Mal Carnegie, Lake Cowal Foundation Project Manager :	0418 370 927
Lake Cowal Foundation Office:	(02) 69 754 732
West Wyalong High School:	(02) 69 722 700, Fax: (02)69 722 236
Barrick Cowal Limited:	(02) 69 754 700
Police, Fire and Ambulance:	000

LCCC EVALUATION

Visiting teachers are asked to complete an evaluation survey of the LCCC, its organisation, facilities, and programs. This will be used by staff to review and improve the centre. As this is a new centre, this information is vital to us to assist in further expansion and improvements.



The Lake Cowal Conservation Centre is funded and operated by the following partners:

