

IP1: Nature Connection Project

Pauline Marsh & Kanchana Wiset



**Sustainable
Communities
and Waste**

National Environmental Science Program

Hub Day update, Wednesday
11th Feb 2026



Project overview

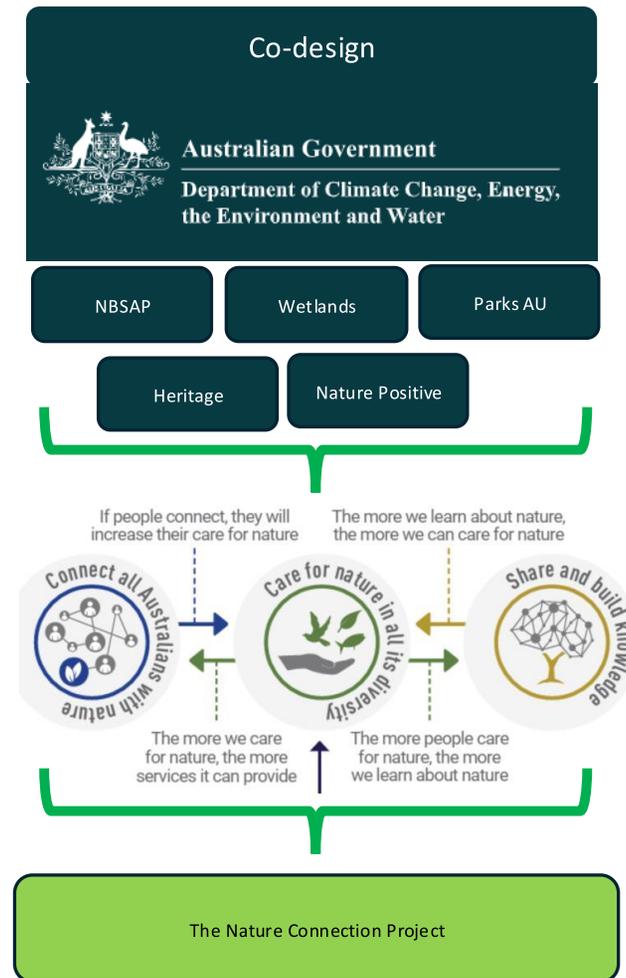


- Nature connection is a key leverage point for sustainability.
- Global studies link NC with higher wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours.
- We know little about NC in the Australian context.
- The Nature Connection Project (NCP) at the University of Tasmania (UTAS) addresses this gap.



Pathways to impact

- The NCP is designed to inform decision-making: our national **survey** findings have been of interest to our policy-making funders at DCCEEW, and to our NGO practitioner partners.
- The nature connection **storytelling project**, our qualitative research arm, invites people to share stories of nature connection. These stories form powerful communications for the project. Storytelling can strengthen nature connection for story tellers and the audience.
- Implementing an **indigenous-led** approach to advance health and wellbeing of Tebrakunna Country, Coastal Plains nation, North-east Tasmania.



The team



Pauline Marsh



Emily Flies



Kate Sollis



Kanchana Wiset



Ariane Moore



Jen Sharman



With: Brenda Lin, Affaf Halimdeen, Usitha Rajeevan, Daphne Bruggemann, Helene Thomas, Abigail Wright, Rob Anders, Lauren Tynan, Vishnu Prahalad, and Jason Byrne

Impact: National Survey Findings

Online panel survey with four sections:

Demographics

Nature Connection

Pro-environmental behaviours

Wellbeing

Individuals with the **highest levels of nature connectedness** are:



82 times more likely to engage in advocacy and public sphere behaviours



4 times more likely to engage in conservation behaviours

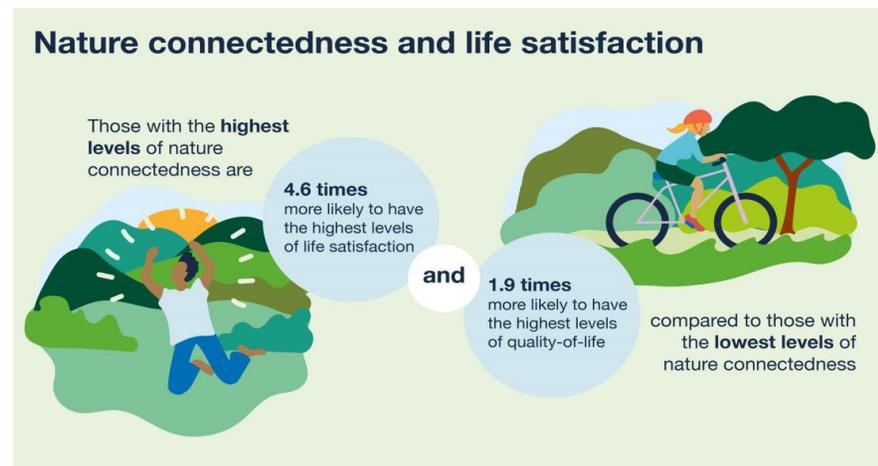


16 times more likely to engage in consumer-conscious behaviours

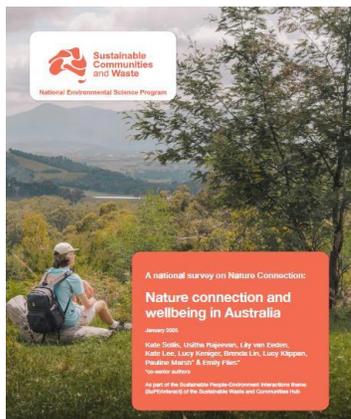
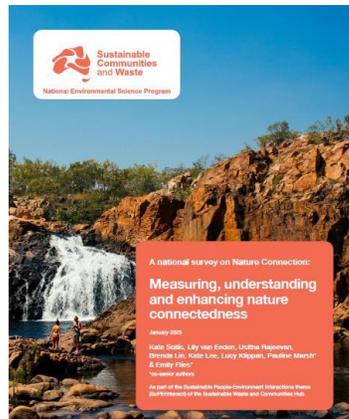
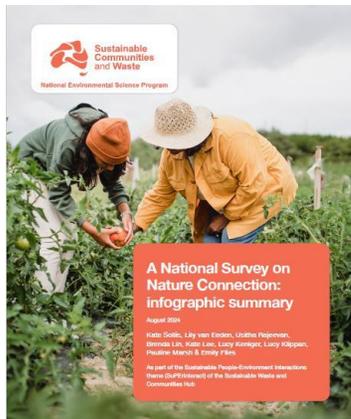


1.8 times more likely to engage in gardening or lawncare activities

Compared to those with the lowest levels of nature connectedness



Short reports



Academic papers

Protecting nature in diverse ways: The socio-demographic spread of benefits from connecting with nature. *Ambio*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-025-02233-6>

Nature connection, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour across an urban gradient: Understanding the regional sweet spot. *Ambio*.

Socio-demographic correlates of nature connection: An Australia-wide study. *SocArXiv*. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/6kt9b>

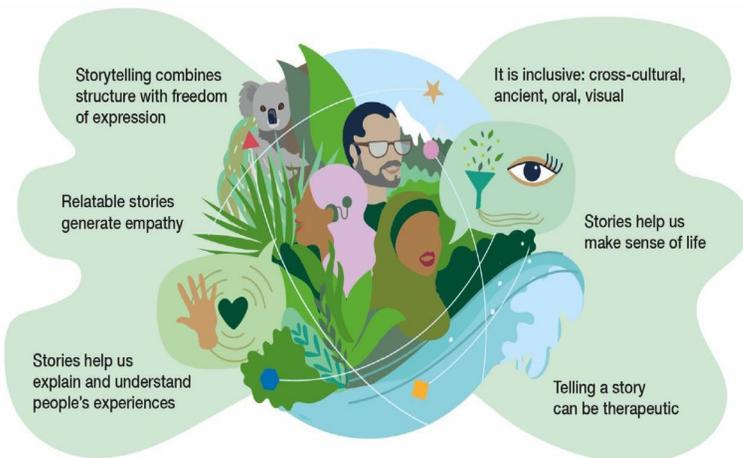
Connecting with nature: The missing link between a satisfied life and a healthy life?. *SocArXiv*. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/s74k9>

Connections, contributions and wonder: Descriptions of meaningful experiences in nature reveal benefits for humans and environments in Australia. *SocArXiv*. https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/qgrb8_v1

Plus! In progress: papers on nature disconnection, visual stories, migrants, and engagement in different environments

Impact: Storytelling Project

How are stories gathered?

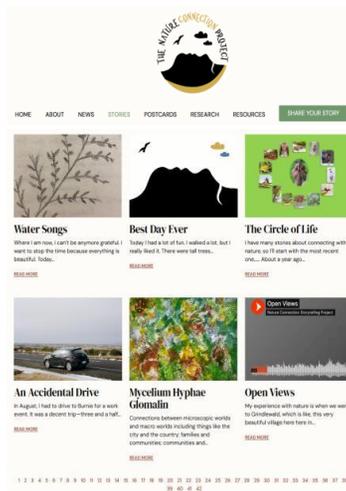


Why storytelling?

Invite people to contribute a story to a public website, with minimal guidance other than simple story prompts.

Work with partners and visit community groups, education providers, and environmental groups in-person, to explain the project and encourage and invite contributions.

Travel the Storytelling Pod. The Pod has participated in numerous events across Tasmania.



Melaythenner Teeackana
Warrana Aboriginal Corporation
Neighbourhood Houses
Libraries
Children's University
Schools
Surfing Tasmania
Australian Deer Association (Tas)
Tas Recreational Fishing
Conservation Volunteers Australia
Landcare Tasmania

Wildcare
Mental Health Council of Tasmania
Council on the Ageing
Tamar NRM
26 Ten (Literacy)
Tas Story Telling Festival
Australian Women Veterans Network
Tas Land Conservatory
Local Governments
State Health Department



Australian nature connectedness

Preliminary themes from story analysis

Complex connections –
body, mind and spirit

*The multidimensionality
of the human experience of
nature connection.*

Heart science – learning
and teaching

*Influences of learning from
and teaching with nature*

Shifts and transformations –
restoring and renewing

*Journeys of change – sometimes a
quiet shift in perception or thinking,
other times a mighty personal
upheaval.*

(Re)connecting –
place, birds and culture

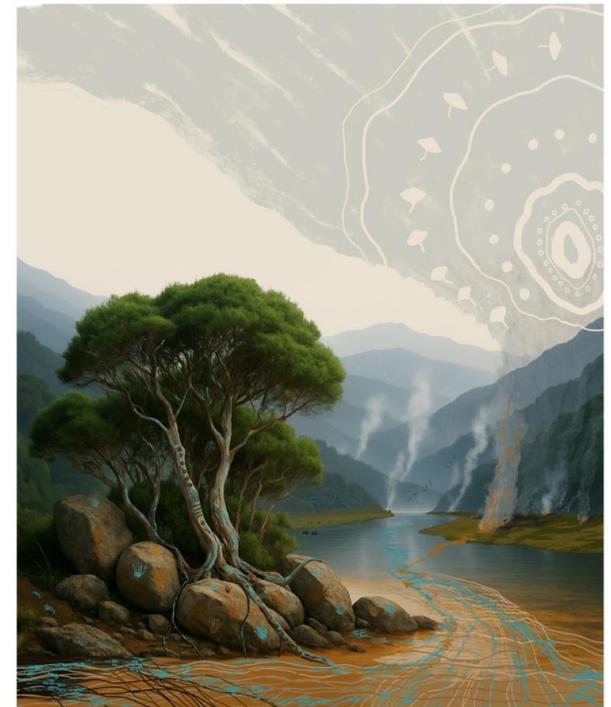
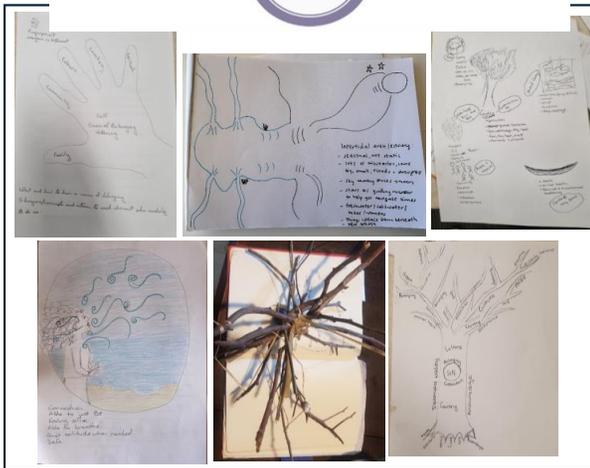
*Finding a way into a connection with
nature, or back to a connection after
disconnection.*

Impact: Indigenous Engagement



Partner organisation:

- Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana Aboriginal Corporation (MTWAC)
- A series of workshops using a participatory process, iterative discussion, and community-led approaches
- Developing a wellbeing framework that reflects community context, understandings, and needs.



The wellbeing framework artwork

Impact: Nature Connection Workshop



Aims:

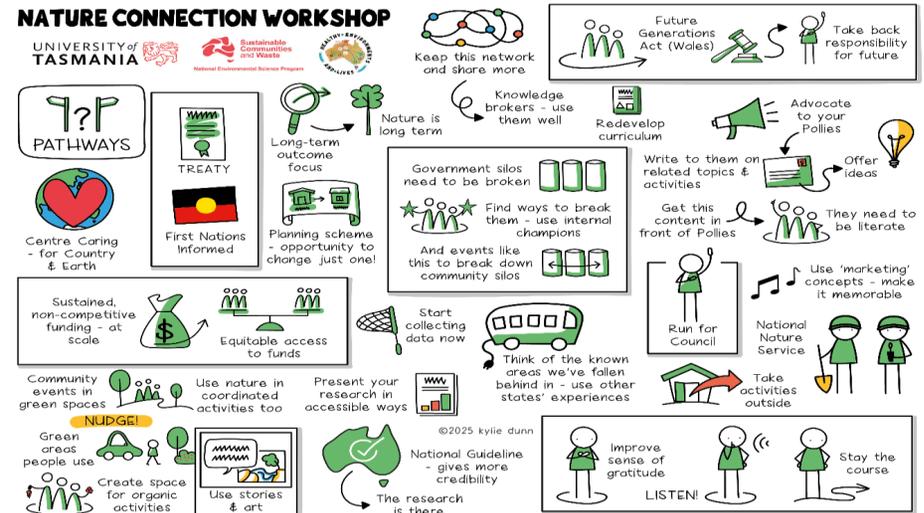
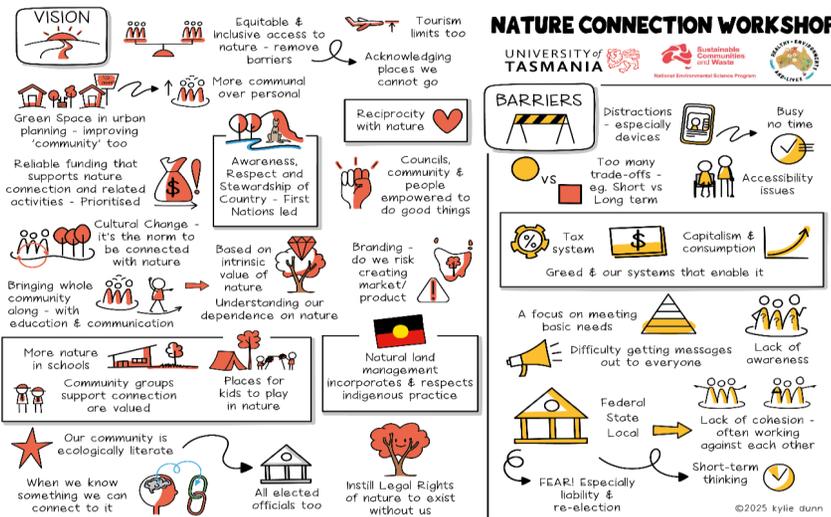
- To create a platform for sharing research findings and knowledge on nature connection benefits for wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours;
- gathering insight on policies and priorities;
- learning good practices of nature connection, programs and building networks.

Who came?

- Over 60 participants reps from government agencies, NGOs, academics, and the private sector.



Outcomes: A shared vision, and co-designed pathways for a more nature-connected Australia



What's next?

- Expanding story-based data collection across the nation
 - working with partner organisations, delivering community storytelling workshops.
- National policy workshop(s)
 - to create platforms for knowledge exchange, experience sharing, and generating insights that inform policy and program development for a more nature-connected future in Australia.
- Investigating the economic benefits of nature connection.



Project EMCRs

The NCP has engaged many EMCRs (including PhD students) from diverse multicultural backgrounds and areas of expertise. The project has continued to strengthen their research skills and capacity in both quantitative and qualitative studies, particularly those investigating different perspectives on the benefits of nature connection for well-being and pro-environmental behaviours (PEB).



Kate:
National survey &
Quantitative
study



Kanchana:
Storytelling &
Qualitative
study



Lauren:
Indigenous
methodologies



Abigail:
Visual story
data analysis



Ari: Story data
management
and project
website



Usitha: Nature
connection
and PEB



Daphne: Youth,
nature
connection, and
climate
resilience

EMCR career impact: Kanchana Wiset



Wider benefits due to this research:

- Adapted and applied my research skills and experience in community engagement and natural resource management to support the project.
- Enhanced my knowledge and expertise on nature-connection research, particularly within the Australian context.
- Strengthened my practice and application of qualitative research methodologies.
- Deepened my understanding of how to translate research findings into meaningful policy implications.
- Expanded my research networks both nationally and internationally.

Way forwards:

- Support the scaling up and scaling out of the storytelling project through strategic partnerships.
- Contribute to developing evidence-based outputs—such as documentation and digital storytelling products—to communicate research insights for policy and program development to wider audiences.
- Facilitate the expansion of the project's research connections and foster collaboration with potential partners in Asia.

Questions?



<https://thenatureconnectionproject.com.au/>

