



**Sustainable
Communities
and Waste**

National Environmental Science Program

Nature Connection Storytelling Project: A codesign workshop report

December 2022

The Sustainable People-Environment Interactions (IP1) team at the University of Tasmania¹



MONASH
University



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Summary of Workshop

Background

- The Australian Government's **National Environmental Science Program (NESP)** contains a number of research '**hubs**' guided by research institutions and partners across industry, government and community.
- **The Sustainable Communities and Waste Hub (SCaW)** has five impact priority areas, one of which is **Sustainable People–Environment Interactions (SuPERInteract)**.
- A key outcome of **SuPERInteract** is the development of practical tools, methods and information to enable sustainable people–environment interactions.
- The **Nature Connection Storytelling Project (NCSP)** is a project of the SuPERinteract theme group.

In response to consultation and research, the Nature Connection Storytelling Project's key outcomes are to:

- develop a repository of stories about nature connection and its impacts, and a national nature connection story map, initially piloted in Tasmania;
- create an accessible platform for gathering and sharing stories of nature connection; and
- work with partners to gather stories in a range of forms (written, oral, visual) that collectively demonstrate a diverse variety of experience, impacts and implications.

From this body of creative work, researchers will then analyse, characterise, map and communicate what nature means to Australians, and document and articulate how we value nature.

Workshop Objectives

1. Update key stakeholders on the Nature Connection Storytelling Project's progress
2. Find out what key stakeholders are already doing in the storytelling space
3. Get feedback about the draft plan for the digital platform
4. Find out how the digital platform could benefit key stakeholders
5. Introduce our new project coordinator.



Workshop Summary

On Dec 6, 2023, the NCSP team, gathered together with partners and stakeholders to share progress on the NCSP and solicit feedback. Twenty-five individuals from 18 different organisations attended the workshop, which was hosted at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. Represented organisations included local governments, state government divisions, not-for-profits, local businesses and academic institutions.

Workshop Feedback

Storytelling

1. Many of the organisations represented at the meeting are already successfully using story telling as a method for reporting and engaging with their audience and funders.
2. Some participants stated they could do with additional support in gathering, promoting and evaluating stories. Tasmanian
3. Participants were keen that a wide variety of stories/voices were gathered so that it was not a project that further polarised the community.
4. The NCSP needs to consider how to creatively engage participants with barriers to participation, such as low literacy levels in Tasmania.

The Digital Platform

1. Be clear on your purpose and audience.
2. Make clear the benefits to partners, so they are happy to input their time and resources e.g. storytelling research outcomes will benefit organisations' evaluation and impact statements.
3. Ask our key stakeholders what they want from the website.
4. Think EROTIC: The stories need to be entertaining, relevant, organisational, thematic, connecting.
5. Remember this is a pilot study that will help identify barriers to collecting stories.
6. Just get started and tweak as you go – it's a dynamic process!
7. We need to headline with inspirational people/stories/images.
8. It needs to be a multi modal site to appeal to learners with different learning styles.
9. When pictures are linked to stories they need to be authentic.

How Would Your Organisation Use the Digital Platform?

1. Having a site that is specific to nature connection will provide an opportunity for us to use it to identify what types of activities work best and why – so definitely as a way of evaluating what we do, ensuring its best practice and in line with current research.
2. We would use it to get internal support for these types of programs – showing that nature connection is important for social change and that they align with organisation strategic goals of making our programs relevant to visitors and community, inspiring people to connect with nature and see the value of our national parks and reserves and the natural and cultural values as well as help us meet some of the UN 17 SDGs.
3. We would also use it to develop supportive partnerships with like-minded organisations where there is a shared goal. And for funding applications if appropriate.
4. We could also use it as a resource particularly where they align with our preferred themes/topics e.g. discovering the impacts of climate change and how you can help, helping to reduce the plastic pandemic, caring for nature and living sustainably on the planet.

Project Communication

- We need to be creative and astute in how we connect with folks that may not be interested.
- What is your hook? That is being part of a nationwide research project that informs government policy?
- Need to include tips on how to tell an effective story.
- Visuals are important to connect emotionally.
- Submission process is complex – needs to be streamlined.
- How will you use social media?
- You need a communications plan.
- Could there be a physical (hard) copy of the stories?

Who is our potential audience?

- Federal Departments of Environment and Health
- Key Partners – especially for the research outcomes and resources
- Story creators
- People disconnected from nature and those involved with nature for commercial or industrial purposes e.g., farmers, fishers, workers in nature
- Schools
- Businesses – as part of their corporate responsibility

Next Steps

1. Website designer, *The Brand Whisperer*, has listened to the digital platform feedback we received and has updated the site accordingly to reflect the importance of **Research Outcomes and Resources** to our key stakeholders.

Please see the updated website framework

<https://xd.adobe.com/view/68596aa7-9e4c-4a95-9d86-e99ff8c81a6b-3d0a/>

2. Project Coordinator, will
 - make contact with key stakeholders in early 2023 to gauge interest in being involved in launching the project, get feedback on the latest digital platform framework and discuss the possibility of setting up a Friends of NCSP advisory committee;
 - use the feedback from the meeting to develop a Communication Plan;
 - connect with Library programs across the state to assist with the collection of stories;
 - investigate practical advice re inclusive technology for the digital platform;
 - connect with The Pet Project on how it could link with NCSP;
 - look into the idea of having a Moth style event to launch the digital platform;
 - connect with Island Story Project and Parks for storytelling tips.
3. Parks to trial Nature Connection Storytelling activities in parks across Tasmania this summer and provide feedback to the research team on what approaches worked and why.
4. Complete ethics approval process at UTAS.

Acknowledgement

The Sustainable Communities and Waste Hub is funded by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program (NESP). NESP recognises and values the experiences, perspectives and cultures of Indigenous Australians and supports Indigenous aspirations to maintain, protect and manage their culture, language, land and sea Country, and heritage. A cross-hub Indigenous Facilitation Network will be supported by the department to drive Indigenous inclusion at the program level.

