

## Members' Page

# CHILDREN TAKE THEIR VOICES TO CANBERRA

*Jo Tregonning*



*Children from Baldivis Primary School meet Hon Julia Gillard in Parliament House to discuss funding opportunities for their projects.  
Photo: BCF Inc.*

Ten years ago in the face of radical change from rural to urban living, children at Baldivis Primary School determined to preserve some of the region's fast diminishing natural environment. From early beginnings in 2001 when the site became a *LFW* property, children and the community have transformed the former farmland block into a vibrant educational centre surrounded by beautiful bushland. It is now known as Baldivis Children's Forest and hosts annual planting events, educational programs for schools and community, and boasts an excellent diversity of flora and fauna.

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### Seeing double

Lynda's response was: "It is quite uncommon for a female to allow another's joey near her, let alone allow it into her pouch! I think you are very lucky to have witnessed such an event."

Meanwhile, the other joey was brought in and Mike and Penney cared for it that night but decided not to keep it and found another carer who was prepared to take it over the next day.

*Mike Murphy is a retired journalist and part-time editor of 'The Walpole Weekly'. His wife Penney is a Silver Chain nurse in Walpole. They live at Crystal Springs, 14 km from Walpole. Email: mjmurphy@westnet.com.au*

A whopping 25,700 seedlings have been planted in the degraded tuart woodlands and Outridge Swamp, and the past four years has seen a 70–90 % seedling survival rate. A successful feral bee control program and installation of wildlife nest boxes has seen possums and large monitor lizards recolonise the old treated hollows. The excitement of children spotting these animals on night stalks is great to hear. Aboriginal cultural learning has formed an important part of developing the Forest and a bush tucker garden, artwork, mia and development of the district's dreamtime trail are physical evidence of Aboriginal learning at the Forest.

Since 2006 the multi-award winning Children's Forest project has been recognised in State, national and international arenas for biodiversity conservation, education and Aboriginal cultural reconciliation. Children speak at numerous events and conferences, the most recent being at the International River Health Conference in Canberra during October 2009 where 'kids teach kids'. Twenty-nine Baldivis Primary School children presented workshops on the Forest project and their work studying water quality in local wetlands and the Serpentine River. They also met with Environment Minister Peter Garrett and Education Minister Julia Gillard in Parliament to highlight a need to fund environmental educational programs such as the Forest project and the Department of Water's Ribbons of Blue program. Visit [www.baldivis-childrens-forest.com.au](http://www.baldivis-childrens-forest.com.au) for more information.

*Jo Tregonning is the Project Officer, Baldivis Children's Forest.*