Community

Garden Project

Defined by the quality of our research
Fertile soils of the community garden nourish connections together. A number of different groups are now regularly involved, from primary and high school students to participants in the Jobs Australia work-for-the-dole program, TAFE trainees, Aboriginal Elders, and members of the local community.

“The fertile soils of the community garden nourish connections between university and community, between research and practice, between cultures, between species, between youth and Elders, between people and food production, between traditional and academic knowledge, and between local action and global change”, Kate explains.

Kate’s research is driven by a desire to integrate social theory with practice.

“The garden project is an experiment in ‘public humanities’. Daily research practice is grounded in the soils of the garden, and in a community research partnership that aims to provide outright benefits to Armidale’s Aboriginal community, bridging socio-economic and cultural divides.”

One example of public humanities research was the From the Garden science engagement project held over three months last year. Academics, students, artists, horticulturalists joined local Aboriginal community members to share knowledge in the Arts and Sciences. Aboriginal weaving practice, language revival and environmental knowledge engaged with Western academic disciplines, promoting dialogue and awareness across the two.

“Indigenous scholars across the globe continue to emphasise the need to legitimise indigenous knowledge systems and methodologies within academia, and this is our aim.”

Dr Kate Wright, Steve Widders & Rob Waters at the garden

In 2016 the garden will continue to host a range of cultural and academic events, becoming a common venue for community groups including the Tamworth Armidale Aboriginal Children’s Service (TAACS).

Dr Kate Wright’s postdoctoral project, ‘Nourishing Culture and Developing Social Capital in a Community Garden’, involves working collaboratively with local Aboriginal community members, organisations and Elders. It is funded under the UNE Postdoctoral Research Fellowships program.
Fertile soils of the community garden nourish connections

Growing Inclusion

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IN 2009 DR. KATE WRIGHT INTERVIEWED LOCAL ABORIGINAL ELDERS IN THE NORTHERN TABLELANDS REGION OF NSW ABOUT THEIR CONNECTION TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

One of her research participants was Anaiwan Elder, Uncle Steve Widders, who led Dr Wright to develop the East Armidale Community Garden for her postdoctoral research project at UNE.

Opened in March 2015, the community garden has so far achieved powerful results in building trust and understanding between divided communities. The team of volunteers helping Dr Wright have created a vibrant and inclusive space that celebrates Aboriginal culture and environmental knowledge.

While the garden’s produce is shared amongst members, the greatest reward is bringing people together. A number of different groups are now regularly involved, from primary and high school students to participants in the Jobs Australia work-for-the-dole program, TAFE trainees, Aboriginal Elders, and members of the local community.

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Improving outcomes for rural and regional communities is at the heart of UNE’s research endeavour. UNE is addressing the most challenging threats to the health, sustainability and livelihoods of regional communities, throughout Australia and abroad.

Professor Annabelle Duncan, Vice-Chancellor & CEO