



Co-Design: the art of connecting community to creek

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Biography:

Glenn Browning is a Civil Engineer at Healthy Land and Water and an expert in stormwater management and water-sensitive urban design. Glenn has over 15 years experience in the water management industry and has worked on major projects including the Gold Coast Desalination Plant, the Brisbane River Flood Study, the Clem Jones Tunnel and the Brisbane River Flood Study.

Glenn is part of Healthy Land and Water's Water By Design team and is responsible for working with the community and industry to encourage sustainable water management and develop innovative frameworks water-sensitive urban design. Glenn regularly leads training courses to showcase the benefits of sustainable waterways and he helps design, construct and manage community projects to restore waterways in South East Queensland.

Abstract:

In 2017, HLW was awarded a federal grant to improve the value of a local waterway. After evaluating several options it was decided to enhance a degraded site at Enoggera Creek, Newmarket. Before project initiation there was a wall of weeds along the banks of the creek significantly impacting the potential biodiversity of the site and although the adjacent park is well used, there is very little access down to the creek edge. In fact, the creek is barely visible and many passers-by did not even realise it was there.

This produced a number of compounding issues including;

- community disconnection from the waterway,
- limited awareness or understanding of local environmental issues,
- missed opportunities for residents to enjoy and relax on the creek bank assisting in mental wellbeing
- missed opportunities for children to interact safely in the riparian area improving education and childhood development skills.
- limited demand for upkeep of the creek bank by the community.
- limited maintenance by council who manage many other priorities,
- a reduction in the long term prospects for our restoration site.

The more traditional local government approach to making an improvement to public greenspace would be to internally undertake works to get to a final design 'draft' and then conduct a high level consultation with the local community to propose the draft as a fait accompli, thus achieving 'rubber stamp' community approval.

We know that enhancement of the long term environmental prospects of the site largely depends on community ownership. So to achieve the desired environmental outcome, the project must also achieve a second goal of re-connecting the community to the creek. This project also aimed to raise the awareness of pollution sources flowing from local streets down to the creek and stimulate direct action.



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By adopting a CoDesign approach we can encouraging community stewardship to manage the long-term care of the project site.

The project has been well received by the community along with other key stakeholders such as local council. Since this approach has not been widely adopted there is need to share our insights as to where this CoDesign process might be best adopted and harnessed to produce the greatest benefit. This paper outlines the key steps required to energise and encourage local communities to reconnect with their creeks and waterways as ongoing stewards of these natural assets through authentic co-design and social connection.