

Talk about a walkabout: pathways and potholes for tropical savannas knowledge in schools

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Savanna Walkabout is the first learning module to be completed for the Tropical Savannas Knowledge in Schools project. The *EnviroNorth* website which provides the framework and support resources for teachers and students for *Savanna Walkabout* and subsequent modules, was launched in February 2007. A CD-ROM of *Savanna Walkabout* was disseminated to all schools in the Northern Territory with a letter of support by the NT Department of Employment, Education and Training's CEO in April 2007. Both resources have been disseminated and promoted in educational professional circles throughout Australia and overseas.

However, one of the largest obstacles with the adoption of *EnviroNorth* and *Savanna Walkabout* is the time and resources required to engage teachers with the module given the remoteness of most schools in northern Australia. Experience since the 2007 launch has demonstrated that it is not until you physically expose teachers to *Savanna Walkabout* and encourage them to engage with it, that its real potential is realised. Presentations, teacher workshops, and face-to-face meetings have reinforced this issue. This has enormous implications for the implementation of the project and resources. The project has taken many pathways with the inevitable potholes along the way. There are bound to be more pathways (and unforeseen potholes) as we map and implements the project's future directions.

Pathways and Potholes

- Promoted and very positive feedback through professional networks and conferences at regional, state, national and international levels including: National (and International) Science Teachers Association; Explore NT (NT DEET); the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (DEWHA) and is included in the Australian School Science Education National Action Plan (2008-2012).
- Direct link from NT schools portal to *EnviroNorth* website as well as NT DEET website.
- Professional links in both Queensland and Western Australia have been developed with *Savanna Walkabout* (& *Burning Issues*) being used at science teachers' workshop in Broome in April.
- Article for national education publication that is distributed (and published by Curriculum Corporation) throughout all State and Territory education departments.
- Linked and incorporated *EnviroNorth*, *Savanna Walkabout* and also *TRARC* into teacher workshops.
- Resources are being incorporated into project – Mainstreaming sustainability into pre-service teacher education across Australia (NT and QLD are pilot projects).
- Funding grant has been granted (led by Dr Linda Ford) for “*Engaging Indigenous students in science using Savanna Walkabout in language*”.
- *Burning Issues*, the second module in the series, is in the final production stages and has received 50% of its funding from Bushfires NT. It will be officially launched in April 2008. Plans underway to pilot *Burning Issues* in Term 3, 2008.

- *Cattle Country*, the next module, will recommence development in April 2008.
- Further funding and consultation will be required for the fourth module, *Caring for Country*.
- Working towards developing Professional Learning for teachers in schools that is an accredited online module that embeds all the *EnviroNorth* resources.