

MEDIA RELEASE

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Newly arrived migrants connect with nature

English language students from ACL Auburn and Parramatta colleges recently “discovered” the Australian bush as part of Operation Blue Tongue.

ACL, the largest provider of high quality English language education in Australia, is participating in the NSW Ethnic Communities’ Council’s Operation Blue Tongue project for newly arrived migrants.

The Auburn College students made their way to Auburn’s Duck River Reserve while the Parramatta College students visited Parramatta Lake.

ACL Auburn College Educational Manager Marina Sherbak said Operation Blue Tongue aims to focus on biodiversity conservation and education by creating opportunities for migrants to develop relationships with their local bushland.

“This breaks down misconceptions about the bush as being dangerous and a place to avoid and creates awareness about negative impacts on local fauna and flora,” Ms Sherbak said.

Students were greeted with a ‘Welcome to Country’ by a member of the relevant local Aboriginal tribe, a few words of the language were learnt and the relationship of the Aboriginal people to the land was explained.

The Auburn students replanted part of the river bank with native trees, shrubs and grasses supplied by Auburn Council and the Parramatta students learnt about special plants in a traditional bush food garden during a bush walk.

ACL Parramatta College Manager Rodolfo Cares said the students were also treated to an Australian reptile ‘meet and greet’ show with a snapping tortoise, a baby crocodile, snakes and a Blue Tongue lizard.

Mr Cares said the students were able to connect with their local environment by getting their hands in the dirt and learning about some of the native animals they might encounter in their own backyards.

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