

HOBART RIVULET: A NATURAL PLAYGROUND?

Above: The Hobart Rivulet.

Land- and coastcare groups are the backbone of local natural resource management, and so we strive to support them in whatever way we can. Through grants programs, technical support and networking, engaging community groups to help them achieve their goals formed a significant part of our 2011–12 activities.

As a scientist and mother of two, Deborah Terry has a pretty simple view of what she wants for the future of the Hobart Rivulet.

“I want the rivulet to be healthy enough for kids to play in again,” she said.

Funding from an NRM South Naturally Inspired Grant and an Australian Government Community Action Grant has enabled the South Hobart Sustainable Community Group and the South Hobart Primary School to kick off a project called Adopt a waterway, which is intended to rejuvenate the rivulet.

Just 9.5 kilometres long, the rivulet has always been an important part of local Aboriginal and European life. For thousands of years the Mouheneenner used it as a trail and source of fresh water, and it was critical to the early European settlement of Hobart.

Emerging from below The Springs on Mt Wellington, the rivulet flows naturally over Strickland Falls, down through South Hobart and into the city centre, where it runs underground before reaching the River Derwent near the Hobart Regatta grounds.

“The rivulet is something that joins and links us with the mountain,” said Deborah. “It’s also a physical entity that flows through and joins our community.”

Deborah is busy preparing the first of four forums that will introduce a new project to South Hobart residents, demonstrating the need to monitor the rivulet’s health.

The main focus of the project is on education and to monitor the number and diversity of macroinvertebrates found in the waterway as an indication of just how healthy the rivulet really is.

“Different waterbugs have different levels of sensitivity to pollution,” said Deborah. “Some are intolerant to pollution.

“So if you find the sensitive macroinvertebrate species in your water system then you know it’s in good health. If none of those sensitive species are present you know you’re in a bit of trouble.”

The project will encourage the community, local school children and families to help monitor the rivulet through workshops and eventually an outdoor classroom.