

# Humula Learnscape:

## A tribute to Mrs Helen Garland



Danielle Collier, Khayne Pendrick  
and David Nicholls

Humula Public School



## *Creative Catchment Kids*

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Murray Catchment Management Authority and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to natural resource management issues. [www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/creative-catchment-kids.html](http://www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/creative-catchment-kids.html)

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## *Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre*

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. [www.wirraminna.org](http://www.wirraminna.org)

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## *Murray Darling Association*

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. [www.mda.asn.au](http://www.mda.asn.au)

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Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. [www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)

# Humula Learnscape: A tribute to Mrs Helen Garland

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Teacher: Lynne French

School: Humula Public School

## *Catchment Champions*

In 2013, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about 'Catchment Champions', people who have made important contributions to managing natural resources in their local community. The program was generously funded by the Murray and Murrumbidgee catchment management authorities.

The Catchment Champions books are part of the Enviro-Stories Education Program.



**Catchment Management  
Authority**  
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**CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY**



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### *BRIEF HISTORY OF MRS GARLAND*

This is the story of Helen Mary-Anne Garland, locally known as Mrs Garland, and the impact she had at Humula Public School. Mrs Garland is our champion because she made our school what it is today by reclaiming the Pony Paddock to make a Learnscape for the students who are lucky enough to attend our school.

From the time she arrived at Humula Public School as principal, Mrs Garland was a true inspiration to the school and to the local community.

## *FROM EUROPE TO NEW SOUTH WALES*

Helen Mary-Anne Nesich was born in Novi-Sad in Europe to a Hungarian mother and Yugoslavian father. She was born in 1952 and moved to Australia when she was seven years old. The young Helen found moving to a foreign land daunting, but was excited about the change. Being an only child she travelled with her mother. They boarded a boat and three months later arrived in Australia.

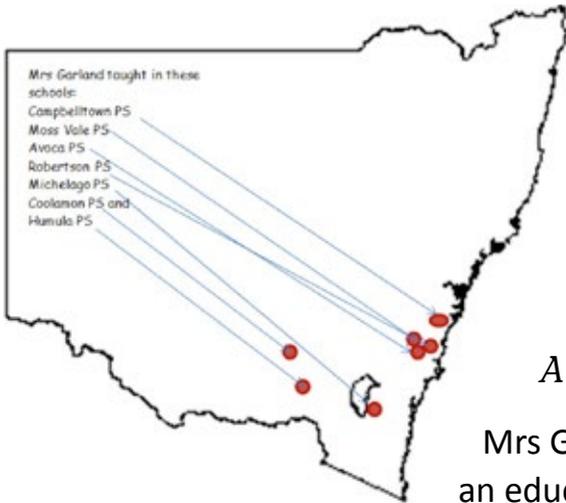


## *OFF TO SCHOOL*

While growing up Helen was educated in public schools (Fairfield Public School and Blackheath Public School), however completed her senior years at a private school (Dominican Convent at Moss Vale).

After studying at Goulburn Teachers College, Miss Nesich graduated and began her teaching career at the age of 21. Her first official appointment was at Campbelltown Public School in 1973.





## *A TEACHER IS BORN*

Mrs Garland has been an educator for 40 years, gathering different experiences along the way. After teaching at schools all over New South Wales for approximately 17 years, she became principal of Humula Public School in 1990. It was here that she decided to dedicate time and energy in restoring the Pony Paddock to a natural area.



## *THE PONY Paddock*

In 1879 the children around the Humula district rode their ponies to school. The Pony Paddock was used for the children to put their ponies in for the day. At the end of the school day they would collect their ponies and ride home.

When Mrs Garland came to Humula Public School the Pony Paddock was bare. There were no trees except for the high storey trees. The paddock was essentially used for grazing by a neighbouring farmer.

Mrs Garland had plans for the Pony Paddock. Her plans were to turn the Pony Paddock into a Learnscape, where children could go down and enjoy the native trees that were to be planted. She thought the school should make use of this great space, rather than it being wasted.

We started from this bare paddock and students and community members planted many trees.





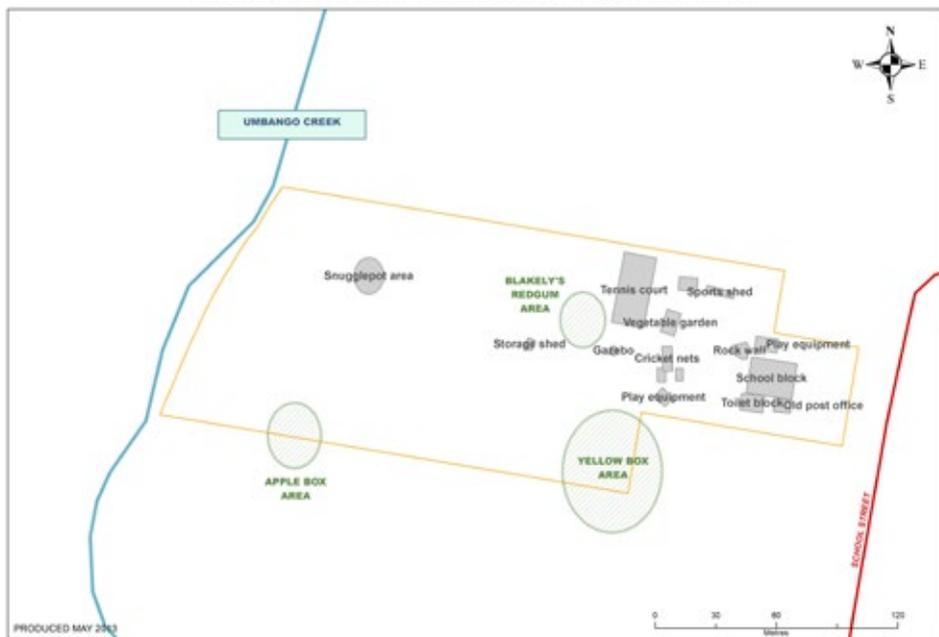
Mrs Garland along with the community planted 850 trees in the early stages of the Pony Paddock project. Due to environmental issues many of the trees did not survive, but determination on the part of Mrs Garland saw the bare paddock become a wonderful natural area.

We planted...and planted...and mulched...and we are still planting lots of trees.

## Humula Public School & Pony Paddock



## Humula Public School & Pony Paddock





## *THE PONY Paddock LEARNSCAPE IDEAS*

When Mrs Garland asked the children who were present at the school to come up with some ideas for the Pony Paddock they were very excited. They had lots of ideas and couldn't wait to share them with each other. The children of Humula Public School chose the features of the Pony Paddock. Mrs Garland took all their ideas and made them into one big Learnscape.

Robert Wandin, an Aboriginal consultant, loved coming down to the Pony Paddock because of its serenity and nature. He assisted Mrs Garland in the planning of the Learnscape and the selection of 'bush tucker' plants to be included.





Snugglepot and Cuddlepie Retreat - 2005



Snugglepot and Cuddlepie Retreat - 2013



Some of the children's ideas included a dinosaur bridge, a butterfly garden, a fitness track, Snugglepot and Cuddlepie retreat, a maze, plants for the platypus, along with revegetating the creek. The children developed the ideas and Mrs Garland helped make those ideas come to life.



When Mrs Garland left Humula Public School she felt satisfied because the Learnscape had a great start. The fact that it wasn't complete didn't matter because Mrs Garland understood that it would be a work in progress. Mrs Garland intended for the Pony Paddock to become a Learnscape for the future children of the school and the community to learn about their native area.

Below: The current children at Humula Public School go over the plans and work out what comes next



Mrs Garland lives a busy life on her farm near the small village of Humula, breeding Arabian horses. She continues to teach children however she now travels daily to Khancoban to share her knowledge with them.

Mrs Garland has told us she hopes to see her vision of the Pony Paddock finished by the current children who attend Humula Public School. We are sure that this will be an ongoing project for years to come. With the continued commitment from staff and student we are sure that the Pony Paddock will become a fantastic learning centre.

As the current students of Humula Public School we thank Mrs Garland for her vision all those years ago. If it wasn't for Mrs Garland's determination to work on this exciting project we would not have the wonderful school environment that we have today.







Khayne Pendrick, Danielle Collier and David Nicholls

2013 Year 6, Humula Public School

The 2012 and 2013 Creative Catchment Kids writing program was showcased at the Seventh World Environmental Education Congress, held in Morocco during June 2013.



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