

## Day 15 Activity

### Tales of the Todd Role Profiles Environmentalists

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#### Role #15 Environmentalists - Landcare

You have a three year contract in Alice Springs and like to contribute to the community. You belong to a local landcare group and volunteer your services to assist with landcare issues.

#### Background

Environmentalists are sometimes volunteers or, as in Alice Springs, find paid work in a range of environmental agencies. They are important because they act as 'citizen watchdogs' who focus on protecting the environment.


Landcare workers aim to educate the public to preserve natural environments such as the Todd River catchment area. This includes the vegetation along the river banks. The plants form a web of roots which help hold the soil in place when the river runs. This prevents erosion. The plant community also acts like a sponge, holding extra water during flooding and releasing it back into the river system, often as underground water, when flow stops.

Other areas of concern for landcare workers are the effects of things like introduced plants in the river system, destruction of trees along the river (including fallen timber that forms refuges for wildlife), and land degradation in areas adjacent to the river bed itself such as floodouts, swamps and claypans.

#### Concerns

With population growth in places like central Australia, better management is needed to make sure the activities of everyone that lives here don't impact on the river system. It is people who have allowed the escape of introduced plants such as buffel and couch along the banks, and this in turn is crowding out the native grasses as well as causing a fire hazard. It is houses being built right along the natural river pathway that have affected the flow and natural processes of the river. There has been overgrazing in places as well as over watering in town areas, resulting in salt and erosion problems. Off road drivers also cause erosion and general land degradation.

State and federal agencies don't have enough person-power or money to be as effective as they would like to be. So they need the help of citizen watchdogs. But it is not easy for citizen volunteers to gain the expertise needed as they often have full time jobs. Also, many people only come to Alice Springs for a short while and there is a high turnover of landcare volunteers. As a result monitoring of the river system is not as good as it should be, or projects get started but are not completed. More citizens must work with state and federal agencies to ensure better protection of the system.



Drawing of  
"Todd River"  
By: Anthony  
Age: 8



## Role #16 Environmentalists – Greening Australia

You have been working for *Greening Australia* in other parts of Australia and have now been in Alice Springs for one year.

### Background

*GA* is a not for profit, community based organisation with over twenty years experience in native vegetation management in the Territory. The multiple environmental benefits of native vegetation are hard to beat - habitat for native animals, shade and shelter for stock and people, beautiful garden plants and protection for streams and rivers.

*GA's* vision is for a healthy, diverse and productive environment valued by the whole community, with a mission to engage the community in vegetation management to protect and restore the health, diversity and productivity of our unique Australian landscapes. They work with landholders, landcare groups, community organisations, local councils, Aboriginal groups, schools and research institutions, government and industry.

*GA* is proud of its track record of involving the community in managing their environment using their understanding of local conditions, local challenges and local people. In addition to their community vegetation management services they run a commercial environmental management services arm to assist the organisation. All profits are reinvested in community work.

As well as paid employees, *GA* has a large group of volunteers who contribute many thousands of hours to hands on activities across the Northern Territory. They are the backbone of the organisation.

### Concerns

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## Role #17 Environmentalists - Waterwatch

You have a growing family, and spend much of your time looking after them. You still find time to do some community service, and at the moment this involves being a waterwatch volunteer. You attend meetings to discuss water quality issues around town, and spend some time every month monitoring some of the permanent or semi-permanent water for changes. You look for evidence of pollution, unusual plant and animal life or other changes that could indicate an environmental problem.

### Background

Waterwatch mainly studies and monitors water quality and ecosystem health in and around the permanent or semi-permanent water collecting points along the otherwise dry river bed. These findings are reported to agencies, environmental groups and the press.

A catchment is a large area of land which serves to catch rainwater and channel it into low lying collection and flow areas such as the Todd River and its tributaries. Catchments are also sources of underground water. In a healthy catchment there is good vegetation growth which slows down runoff as it moves into stream channels. More water can then soak into the soil and seep into underground aquifers. Floods are reduced and erosion lessened.

Another issue for waterwatch is the monitoring and education about the effects of what goes down the drain in urban and semi-urban areas. It is important for people to know that what we do in one part of a catchment affects another further down the run-off or flow pathway. For example, oils or other waste that is washed down a driveway into the street drainage system may end up flowing out into the dry river bed, settling there until flooding occurs and then polluting a waterhole much further downstream.

Environmentalists are important because they act as 'citizen watchdogs' and work to protect the environment.

### Concerns

With population growth in places like central Australia, better management is needed to make sure the activities of all these people don't impact on the river system. People often don't realise that actions they take far away from the river bed itself can be harmful.

State and federal agencies don't have enough person-power or money to be as effective as they would like to be. So they need the help of citizen watchdogs. But it is not easy for citizen volunteers to gain the expertise needed as they often have full time jobs. As a result things happen along the river system. More citizens must work with state and federal agencies to ensure better protection of the system.



## Role #18 Environmentalists - Field Naturalists

You are an enthusiastic member of the local field naturalists group. You enjoy bushwalking and birdwatching and worry about the effects of the growing Alice Springs population on the bushland. You see signs of land degradation all around, including illegal camping and rubbish dumping, tracks and campfire sites, as well as damage done by fires and salinity.

### Background

Many local people just like to observe nature and share the wonder of the natural world with others.

Some field naturalists give volunteer help to the state and federal agencies responsible for protecting wildlife and habitat.

Environmentalists are important because they act as 'citizen watchdogs' and work to protect the environment.

### Effects on the river system

As volunteers, field naturalists take part in projects that monitor local flora and fauna. They share this information with scientific agencies and anyone else who is interested. Their actions don't have an immediate effect on the river, although they can assist in preserving its quality.

### Concerns

With population growth in places like central Australia, better management is needed to make sure the activities of all these people don't impact on the river system. People often don't realise that actions they take far away from the river bed itself can be harmful.

State and federal agencies don't have enough person-power or money to be as effective as they would like to be. So they need the help of citizen watchdogs. But it is not easy for citizen volunteers to gain the expertise needed as they often have full time jobs. As a result things happen along the river system. More citizens must work with state and federal agencies to ensure better protection of the system.