



## Media release

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# Outdoor classroom hosts new biodiversity lessons

Students at Thuringowa State High School are the first to try out a new biodiversity learning initiative that's allowing them to get up close and personal with some scaly and furry friends.

NQ Dry Tropics has developed 'Healthy Habitats for Schools' to enable schools to meet new Education Queensland curriculum requirements relating to the management of grounds and the teaching of biodiversity concepts.

Community Support Officer, Laura Dunstan, said over the past two days, NQ Dry Tropics and local group Hands on Wildlife have hosted special outdoor classroom lessons for Year 9 students.

"Schools are now required to meet targets in relation to biodiversity on their school grounds, along with water, waste and energy use," Laura said.

"The clear message we received from local schools was that they needed help to meet their biodiversity targets, and that's why we developed this program.

"Aside from assisting schools to improve school grounds, it's really designed to teach students about their natural environment, and about the importance of protecting native Australian animals and their habitats."

This morning's outdoor classroom activity involved a biodiversity lesson for students in their school's rainforest area, followed by a walk around habitats on their grounds, and time with some native animals.

Shelley DeRuyter from Thuringowa State High School's Math and Science Department welcomed the initiative.

"What better way to enhance a child's understanding of biodiversity concepts than by allowing them some hands on experience," Shelley said.

"The interaction with animals is really engaging, and reinforces the message more than any book possibly can.

"We hope these direct experiences, and the worksheets and lessons that form part of this initiative, will give students some very clear ideas on how to protect our unique environment."

A free online tool kit is also available to all schools, covering topics such as planting cyclone resistant native trees, avoiding dangerous plants and declared weeds, companion planting for school vegetable gardens and ideas for student activities.

The Healthy Habitats for Schools kit can be found at [www.nqdrytropics.com.au](http://www.nqdrytropics.com.au).

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NQ Dry Tropics' region includes the local government areas of Townsville, Charters Towers, Burdekin, Isaac, Barcaldine, Etheridge, Hinchinbrook, Palm Island and the Whitsundays. **Media contact** Sara Lando 4722 5729, 0466 014 728.

Working together to improve land and water