This is the published version of the abstract:


Available from Deakin Research Online:

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30013832

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright : 2002, Edith Cowan University
The sky's the limit: using nature-based interventions to create sustainable solutions to problems of health and wellbeing for individuals and communities.

Mardie Townsend, Deakin University, Australia
Cecily Maller, Deakin University, Australia
Lawry St. Leger, Deakin University, Australia
Peter Brown, Lort Smith Animal Hospital, Australia

Recent research undertaken by staff at Deakin University's School of Health Sciences, in collaboration with Parks Victoria and its Strategic Partners, has indicated that contact with nature may be an important factor in the promotion of human health and wellbeing. International research indicates that simply viewing a natural scene or watching wildlife has been shown to reduce stress and tension, improve concentration, remedy mental fatigue, boost immunity, and enhance psychological health. That is aside from any physical health benefits (for example, in terms of cardiovascular health) that may flow from reduced stress, increased exercise and improved air quality experienced by those whose contact with nature involves activities in natural environments. The literature suggests that interacting with nature through gardening or having a companion animal is also beneficial for health, and where these activities involve contact with other humans, may extend benefits beyond the individual to the community, through enhanced social capital.

On the basis of these findings, the Deakin-based team has begun work on an exciting range of research and intervention projects. The potential applicability of nature-based interventions for improving individual and community health and wellbeing is enormous. As well as setting out the potential scope of the work flowing from the initial research, in terms of target groups, research foci, intervention strategies, and likely benefits, this paper reports on progress to date in establishing a program of Australian-based empirical research. It proposes the establishment of alliances between researchers and practitioners in a range of disciplines to ensure that the links between contact with nature and human health and wellbeing are explored and expressed in ways that are both beneficial and sustainable.